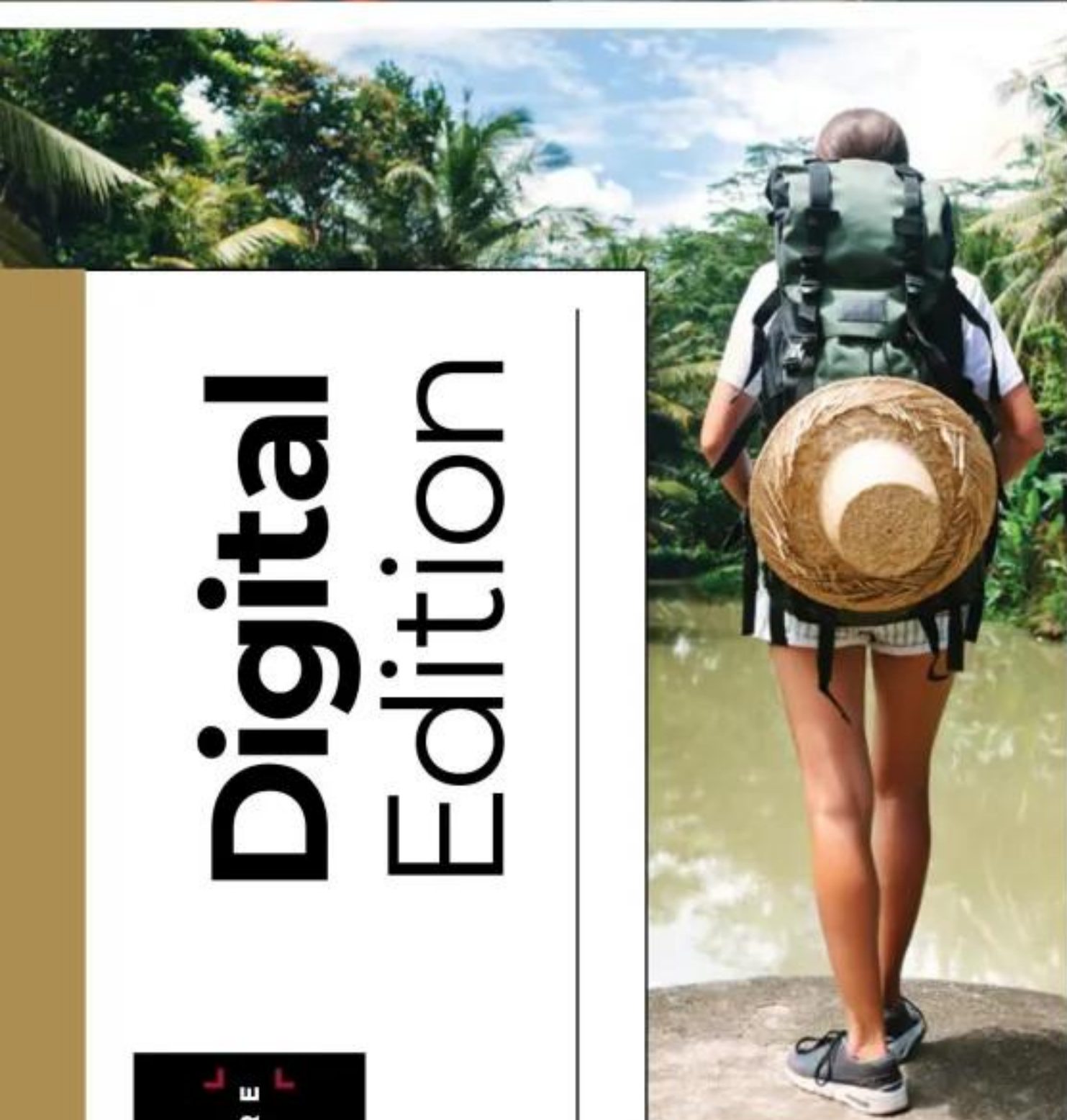


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Welcome

We might all have different ideas of what is meant by an 'adventure', but can probably all agree that an adventure is something that excites us or moves us in some way. Perhaps it's something that's been on your bucket list for many years, or maybe it's something you stumble across and the spontaneous nature of it makes it exhilarating.

Whatever you consider to be adventurous, there's something in this book to suit all desires, budgets and ages. From the highest heights to the very depths of the ocean; from once-in-a-lifetime wildlife encounters to immersing yourself in local cultures; from high-speed challenges to slow but awe-inspiring experiences – whatever floats your boat, be inspired and start planning your next adventure today!



DISCLAIMER

In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some destinations in this book may not be safe to visit because the situation is unpredictable and could further escalate without warning. Where you see this icon, check government advice on travelling to these countries.

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a dramatic impact on global travel. As such, the locations, activities and websites mentioned within may no longer be available or appropriate. Always check the current travel guidelines when planning a trip, and adhere to any local restrictions at your destination.

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*Start your
adventure today!*

Adventures AWAIT

The word adventure can mean so many different things to so many people. For some people, it isn't an adventure unless you're leaping out of something very high, driving something very fast or generally in mild fear for your life. For others, adventure simply means getting out of the house and seeing something unique. Whether you're a gap year student

heading out on your own for the first time, or a seasoned traveller looking for a new thrill, each individual's definition of adventure depends on so many things – age, gender, health, culture, personality type – that there's no way to pin down an exact definition of 'adventure'.

However, if you've picked up this book, there's a pretty good chance that you're interested in seeing something extraordinary, getting out of your comfort zone, fulfilling a life-long ambition or simply trying to get inspiration for your next holiday destination. If that's the case, then you're bound to find something in the following 101 pages that will whet your wanderlust. The world is a huge place and each continent, each country, each state, province or county has something different to offer, so the choice can be quite overwhelming if you don't quite have your exact bucket list planned out. However, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step – and that step was opening this bookazine.

The adventures in this list have been carefully chosen to not only demonstrate the most exciting, the most jaw-dropping, the most

wonder-inducing possible, but also to make sure there's a little something for everyone. Whether this is your first time looking for something a little out of the ordinary or you're a seasoned traveller who can't go more than a few months without getting itchy feet to seek a new mountain to scale, river to sail, or hidden cave to explore, you're more than covered here. We've got expert guides on how to get the most out of trips to iconic landmarks such as the Great Wall of China, the Eiffel Tower or Uluru, while those who want something a little more off the beaten track can take a trip to the Gates of Hell, the edge of the Victoria Falls or a subterranean city in Poland. We've scoured the globe to make sure there are adventures on every continent so you're never too far away from being able to do something amazing, whether that's swimming with pigs in the Bahamas, running a marathon in the Moroccan desert or hurling tomatoes at strangers in Spain. And not all adventures have to get you hot under the collar.

hand, but you get the picture!

You don't necessarily have to travel to far-flung, exotic locations to have an adventure either. Sometimes the most thrilling and unusual activities can be right on your doorstep. You might just not have known about them until now. After all, how often have you had a visitor who wanted to see the local attraction and you've had to sheepishly admit you've never been? There is everything here, from taking a slow boat in South East Asia to being catapulted over a ravine in New Zealand. Lovers of the natural world can find out where to see gorillas, orangutans and polar bears in the wild, while fitness junkies can get their kicks from cycling, running or swimming some of the most challenging terrains the planet has to offer. There are adventures to suit every pocket, every age range and even those to do with kids, so no one feels left out. The only difficult thing will be deciding what to do first!

Those who prefer to avoid the heat can experience staying in a Canadian igloo, visiting Argentina's Perito Moreno Glacier or watching the northern lights from within the Arctic Circle. And for those of you who prefer to go it alone, there's plenty here too for the solo traveller, like staying with an indigenous family, swimming with dolphins and ghost-hunting. Okay, maybe that last one is best done with someone else to hold your

ORGANISE YOUR ADVENTURE

Adventures don't just happen – they need careful planning and preparation to make them fun and safe

IS IT SAFE?



Adventures can create memories that will last a lifetime. However, if you want those memories to be good, make sure your adventure is safe. Ensure that any experience is suitable for you, taking into account your age, physical health, mental health and any other relevant considerations. For those adventures that use equipment or are in treacherous locations, always check, double check and withdraw if you don't feel comfortable.

COSTS



Every adventure has a little surprise involved, but you don't want that to be at your expense – literally! Work out if expensive peak season is best or whether you can save by going out of season. Take care with currency conversions as miscalculations can have costly results. Be aware of hidden or extra costs, like equipment hire, visas or travel. Factor all this in when deciding where, when and how you'll have your next thrill.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES



The world is a huge place with a multitude of different ways of living life. Whenever you go somewhere, do some reading in advance to understand the culture of the place you're visiting so you can act appropriately. This may include learning local etiquette, respecting dress codes and even tipping. Everything that can be done to make the locals feel respected should be done so that everyone can enjoy the experience and go home happy.

“ Each continent, each country, each state, province or county has something different to offer ”



01 GO CANYONING IN THE AZORES

Take a leap of faith and make a splash in these idyllic Portuguese islands

The Azores is a group of Portuguese-owned volcanic islands way out on their own in the mid-Atlantic. They are stunning in their own right, with beautiful beaches and great weather, but if there's one thing adventurers know about volcanic islands, it's that there is a whole lot of fun to be had exploring their nooks, crannies and hidden secrets. Some have great mountain biking, others fantastic diving, but the Azores are world leaders in canyoning.

This high-octane activity involves splashing through rivers, abseiling into gorges, leaping off ledges and sliding down waterfalls as you

traverse the landscape in one of the most exciting and unique ways possible. Rivers are often said to be the arteries of a country, so what better way to get right into its heart than walking its waterways? The mountainous and volcanic nature of the Azores make them the ideal place to enjoy canyoning – there are dozens of exciting routes, jumps, descents and crags to negotiate under the watchful eye of an experienced guide. The fertile nature of volcanic soil also means that the islands are littered with thick, verdant forests that provide an idyllic backdrop to your breathtaking adventure.

Of the nine islands, three are notable for canyoning: Sao Miguel, Sao Jorge and Flores. Sao Jorge is generally considered to have the most challenging courses, while Flores caters towards the less confident canyoner. Sao Miguel has the greatest range of options, with the highlight of the island's Salto do Cabrito area being a stunning waterfall that will stop even the most energetic canyoner in their tracks. No matter which island you choose, though, you'll have an exhilarating experience, full of adrenaline-pumping moments, beautiful scenery and one of the most memorable sightseeing tours imaginable.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

It is recommended – but surprisingly not required – to know how to swim in order to go canyoning.

Location:

The Azores, Portugal

Time zone:

UTC -1



Best time to visit:

Winter is the best time to go canyoning in the Azores, as the rain fills the rivers for maximum fun.

Waterfalls like this one on Sao Miguel Island can be looked up to or abseiled down from

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Bolivians drive on the right, but along Death Road they drive on the left to allow descending vehicles to make sure their tyres are still on the road!

Location:

Yungas region, Bolivia

Time zone:

UTC -4

Best time to visit:

May to October misses the rainy season, but the earlier you go the better the waterfalls.



Over 40 years ago, around 200 to 300 people were estimated to have died annually while travelling on Death Road

02

MOUNTAIN BIKE DEATH ROAD

Take the comparatively safe route down the world's most treacherous highway

Death Road isn't the kind of place for a nice, relaxing Sunday afternoon bike ride. But it is a once-in-a-lifetime, thrilling descent down one of the world's most infamous roads that will leave you breathless in more ways than one.

Yungas Road in Bolivia is a narrow route through the Andes with rocky cliffs to one side and a terrifying sheer drop on the other. The road from La Paz to Coroico has claimed hundreds of lives as vehicles tumbled into the ravines far below due to poor visibility, wet conditions or a failed pass on a track barely wide enough for one car. So what kind of crazy person would hop onto a bicycle to descend such a death trap?

Mountain biking down Death Road sounds more dangerous than it actually is. A new highway has diverted much of the traffic, leaving it freer for thrill-seekers to enjoy the stunning views on offer. The route starts at La Cumbre, around 4,700 metres (15,400 feet) above sea level. For around £100 (\$125) tour companies provide equipment and provisions, so all you have to do is remember how to ride a bike! After a test ride, you join the infamous gravel and dirt path descending 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) through Bolivia's unique jungle/mountain topography.

If you dare to take a peek over the edge at the 1,000-plus-metre (3,300-plus-foot) drops,

you'll be treated to the stunning sight of trees, rivers, waterfalls and clouds far below. Truly there can be few better sensations in the world than freewheeling down a mountain above the cloud line. Almost the entire route is downhill, with only a few flat or uphill sections to test your leg muscles. After around 40 kilometres (25 miles) of twisting, turning, braking and scenery-gazing, you finally arrive at the bottom of Death Road.

To get a unique look at the natural wonders of South American jungles and mountains, a bit of exercise and, most importantly, an excuse to tell your friends that you cheated Death, mountain biking Death Road is the adventure for you.



Wing walks made use of these fine Boeing Stearman biplanes

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure that your clothes fit well and wear soft-soled trainers or shoes that lace up. ➔

Location:

Various, across the UK

Time zone:

UTC



Best time to visit:

Summer is the best time because flights won't take place in bad weather.

03

WING WALK

Forget first-class travel in a jumbo jet – flying doesn't get more exhilarating than this!

Many adventures require you to travel somewhere by plane, but sitting inside an air-pressured cabin for hours on end isn't the most exhilarating of experiences. If the idea of flying tires you, then why not turn expectations upside down? Instead of going inside a plane, you can travel outside and enjoy the journey while being strapped to the wing!

Wing walking is life-affirming and you don't need to be a daredevil stunt performer in order to take part. There are opportunities at airfields across the United Kingdom and they typically

enable you to enjoy the thrill of being on the top wing of a Boeing Stearman biplane as the pilot performs an assortment of moves, some of which will cause butterflies in your stomach.

Flying at speeds of up to 110 miles per hour, the adventure is available for anyone between the ages of 18 and 80, who is fit and healthy and weighs less than 85 kilograms (13 stone 4 pounds). You can also gather friends and family to watch, making for a fun, shared experience, although you're going to be the undoubted star of the show.

One thing's for sure, there's no danger. You'll be given a safety briefing, told what to expect and get the opportunity to speak to the experienced pilot about what you want: after all, it's supposed to be fun and pilots will want to ensure they pull off the manoeuvres that you're likely to enjoy.

From then on, it's a matter of soaking in every second of your adventure, knowing you're safely secured using a five-point harness. As you soar through the air with the wind battering your face, you will feel like a bird. The sights, sounds and feeling are like nothing on Earth!

04

SOAK IN THE IGUAZÚ FALLS

Who wants a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow when you could have a jungle paradise?

In the waterfall family album, Iguazú Falls seems to be destined to always be the bridesmaid and never the bride. It's neither the tallest (Venezuela's Kerepakupai Merú, aka Angel Falls, takes that title), the largest by flow (this is Inga Falls in DR Congo), the widest (see Laos' Khone Phapheng Falls) nor the most visited (Niagara Falls on the US/Canada border).

But when you arrive at this rainbow-filled complex of cascades amidst the lush forest straddling Brazil and Argentina, its lack of world-record credentials could not matter less.

You can enjoy this waterfall wonderland from both countries, though around 80% of the 250-plus falls lie within Argentina. Ideally, allow enough time to visit both sides, as the panoramic vistas from the Brazilian banks are arguably more spectacular. What's more, Argentina's Iguazú National Park offers plenty more

opportunities for you to fully immerse yourself in the glorious scenery.

Start with a ride on the open-sided narrow-gauge railway (or take a hiking trail) through the rainforest to La Garganta del Diablo (Devil's Throat). A steel walkway leads out over the river until you're peering into the churning white torrents of Iguazú's biggest waterfall. Enveloped in misty spray and the roar of 1,800 cubic metres (64,000 cubic feet) of water tumbling 80 metres (260 feet) every second is a humbling reminder of nature's power.

Of course, any adventurer worth their salt won't be content with just viewing the falls from above. It's possible to swim in the plunge pool of Salto Arrechea – a comparatively gentle cataract at the end of the Macuco Trail. But if you are in the market for a more serious shower, hop on an open-top truck to Puerto Macuco.

Posed with the decision of 'wet boat' or 'dry boat', most opt for wetter the better (rest assured, everyone gets a dry bag to store valuables). Ponchos are available but their effectiveness is debatable.

The inflatable vessels motor up the river, whetting (and indeed wetting) your appetite as they negotiate a series of rapids along the way. The first cascade cool-off comes courtesy of the Tres Mosqueteros (Three Musketeers). Opposite, you can marvel at the roiling waters of the Devil's Throat from a different angle (though this one is too powerful to venture beneath).

The pièce de resistance is Iguazú's second-largest waterfall, San Martín. Looking up at the epic curtain of water pouring over the cliff, part of you wonders, 'Surely we're not going in there?'. Then you begin to realise that's exactly where you're heading!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Save the boat tour until the end of your visit to the park and pack a spare change of clothes to wear afterwards!

Location:

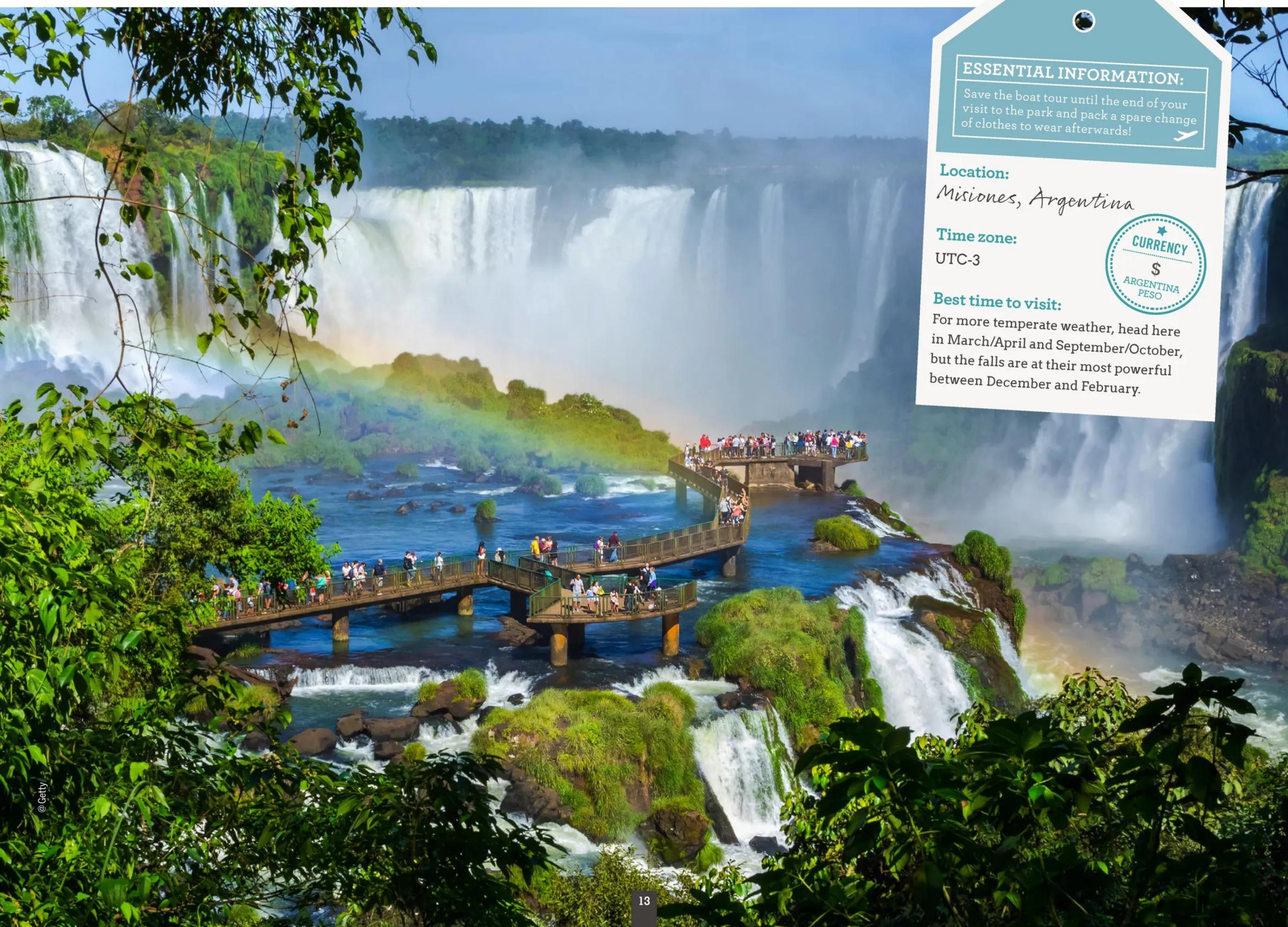
Misiones, Argentina

Time zone:

UTC-3

Best time to visit:

For more temperate weather, head here in March/April and September/October, but the falls are at their most powerful between December and February.



05

GO ON A HUSKY SLED RIDE

Hop aboard a husky sled ride and experience Lapland's most historic mode of transport

A visit to Lapland isn't complete without meeting the country's native canine friends: the huskies. Dog sledding, usually pulled by a team of huskies, has a fascinating history and is offered to tourists all year round. Humans have worked with huskies in the Arctic region over hundreds of years – they were once crucial for communication and trade before the invention of modern transportation. The dogs are well known for their love of running, and have been bred specifically for their thick coats and

ability to traverse blankets of wintry snow and ice. Nowadays the huskies are hugely popular with visitors to the country, with sledding just being one of the activities offered with the pups.

While dog sledding is widely regarded as an ethical activity, take care to book your excursion with an established husky farm, and avoid 'pop up' farms that sometimes bring dogs from overseas for the tourist season. With that in mind, enjoy the chance to experience the dogs doing the thing they do best: running.

Prices vary greatly depending on exactly what it is that you're looking for. A straightforward two-hour husky ride will cost upwards of £80 (\$94), while additional activities such as husky farm tours, and any additional food and beverages, will incur an extra fee.

If you're looking for something more adventurous, multi-day excursions are available from some providers and you can even book a nocturnal experience with the chance to spot the aurora borealis as you race across the snow.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure that you pack your suncream, as you can still get burnt from time spent out in the sun.

Location:

Lapland, Finland

Time zone:

UTC+2

**Best time to visit:**

November and early December or in the spring. This will avoid the influx of tourists over Christmas and the shortest days of the year in February.



Husky dogs speed through the snow during a sled ride

“This impossible inhabited oasis is a marvel you won’t be expecting”

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Getting to Huacachina is simple with Peru Hop, a tourist bus service that stops at the most popular destinations.

Location:

Huacachina, Peru

Time zone:

UTC -5

Best time to visit:

It’s always dry in the desert, but December to March are the warmest months.



Huacachina is the oasis built around the sand dune tourism, which makes it a particularly unique place to spend some time

06

SURF ON SAND DUNES

Ditch the obvious tourist traps in Peru for one of the most memorable day trips of your life

Sand dune surfing is one of those adventurous activities that is often used as the example for which all self-professed adventurers must adhere to, a sort of standard bearer for a lifestyle. It’s easy to see why though, isn’t it? It’s a little uncanny, what with its similarities to snowboarding, except it takes place in empty, barren landscapes. Riding down sun-laden dunes is sort of like flouting the laws of nature, and perhaps that’s the reason it’s so appealing for adventurers: it truly is an incredible adrenaline rush.

Naturally there are a few places in the world where you can partake in some sand surfing, in fact wherever there are sizable mounds of tiny

rocks you’ll likely find an opportunity to ride the sandy waves. But unlike snowboarding, there isn’t really an infrastructure around this adrenaline-pushing activity, so you’ll usually rely on a tour guide to get you there, get you kitted out and get you ripping down the dunes. You might not think of Peru as top of the list when it comes to sand surfing, but the largest sand dunes in South America are located at Huacachina, making this one of the best places to go if you’re keen to give the experience a go.

The great thing about sand dune surfing is that it doesn’t really need much in the way of practice. Surfers, skateboarders and snowboarders naturally tend to have an extenuating interest

in riding dunes instead of their usual climes, but sand is incredibly forgiving – you can even ride down on your stomach if that feels most comfortable. There are always the guides on hand to give you pointers and assistance, so you won’t miss out because of inexperience.

And then there’s beautiful Huacachina itself, which only adds to the adventure. There are plenty of spectacles to discover in Peru – both natural and human made – but this impossible inhabited oasis is a marvel you won’t be expecting. Add in the chance to watch the sun dip down beyond the horizon while sitting atop the tallest sand dunes on the continent, and you can see why it’s a place that calls to adventurers.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

The average expedition to Everest's summit takes two months, so start banking your annual leave. ✈

Location:

Himalaya,
Nepal & Tibet

Time zone:

UTC +5.45

Best time to visit:

April to May for summit attempts.



After reaching Base Camp, climbers usually spend three to six weeks establishing camps and acclimatising before making a summit attempt



07 CONQUER MOUNT EVEREST

To many, standing at the highest point on Earth is the ultimate adventure

Erupting from the Himalayan massif, Mount Everest stretches heavenward in all its 8,849-metre (29,029-foot) splendour. The world's tallest mountain, Everest has lured climbers and hippies for decades. Though the first recorded summit attempt was made in 1921, Everest remained unconquered until 1953, when Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary first reached the origami-fold peak. Since then, around 4,000 people have stood at its peak, and around 800 attempt the feat each year.

The ultimate mountaineering adventure, those determined to stand at the Top of the World need two things: nerves of steel and deep pockets – expeditions with reputable companies start at £60,000 (\$76,000), though many charge north of £80,000 (\$100,000).

While there are more than a dozen routes to Everest's summit, most expeditions follow one of two routes. From Nepal, the Southeast Ridge route follows the footsteps of Norgay and Hillary. Meanwhile, from Tibet, the North Ridge follows a route discovered by George Mallory before he disappeared in 1924. While both are considered difficult – and deadly – each has its pull. The Southeast Ridge boasts a slightly shorter summit day climb and an easier descent in case of emergency. However, this route does require mountaineers to battle through the hazardous Khumbu Icefall.

From Tibet, climbers can drive to Base Camp but pay the price for this by having to navigate swathes of terrain above 8,000 metres (26,000 feet) – known as the Death Zone.

For those not convinced to risk life and limb, Everest Base Camp offers a hit of high-altitude Himalaya without the risk of frostbite. The iconic two-week hike begins in Lukla and passes deep into Sherpa country before propelling on to the town of Namche Bazaar.

Then, the trail snakes through rhododendron forests until the razor-sharp ridges of Ama Dablam appear. Rolling into wind-swept Pheriche, the landscape transforms into a watercolour of grey and white. From here, the cairn-lined trail soars skyward as snow-speckled peaks and desolate rocky ridges roll out to the horizon. After Gorak Shep, the last village before Base Camp, the trail glides across the Khumbu Glacier before breaking onto camp and the world's tallest mountain comes within touching distance.

08

BATHE IN ZAMBIA'S DEVIL'S POOL

Take a dip in nature's most incredible infinity pool – the edge of Victoria Falls

Generally, waterfalls are things to be admired from afar or below, especially mile-wide ones that see 500 million litres of water thundering over its edge per minute. However, like Beelzebub himself, the Devil's Pool is tempting, alluring, exciting, intoxicating and something you know your mother is going to tell you to steer clear of. However, what is life without the occasional devil-may-care attitude?

Devil's Pool is an area on the lip of the Victoria Falls where the water flow is less like a deafening power-washer and more like a watering can. The gentle water flow, the high ridge, the stony crop known as the Devil's Armchair and the fact that no tourist has fallen over the edge, all perfectly

combine to enable thrill-seekers to leap into the Zambezi River and gaze over the edge of the world's largest waterfall, knowing that they are as safe as if they were relaxing in a pool on an all-inclusive resort. Just with a much, much better view.

Visitors get taken to Livingstone Island, named after the Scottish explorer David Livingstone, by one of the regular boat tours that leave from the Zambian shores. From there, the guides leap into the water, showing you where to swim before you and your travelling companions take the plunge as well. From the Devil's Armchair you can enjoy taking in the 100-metre high (328-foot high) drop to the river below and wonder

at the shimmering rainbow effect created by the mist and spray. The tours start from around £90 (\$110) with breakfast included, or you can splash out a bit more for lunch or high tea. Just be sure to check in advance that the pool is accessible and open, because this natural wonder is beholden to the weather conditions.

When Livingstone saw the Falls, he reportedly said, "Scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels," so it's somewhat ironic that the area is now named after a fallen angel. Whether you believe chilling on the edge of a waterfall is a heavenly experience or something a little bit devilish, this is certainly one adventure that it would be a sin to miss out on.



Devil's Pool is located on the top ridge of the Victoria Falls in Zambia. Just don't drop your camera!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

You can organise a tour from neighbouring Zimbabwe – just leave plenty of time to cross the border and obtain a visa.

Location:

Victoria Falls,
Zambia

Time zone:

UTC +2

Best time to visit:

August to December because that's your best chance for calm, low water.



This experience is available to anyone over the age of 12 who is at least a moderately strong swimmer

09

SLEEP IN A SWEDISH ICE HOTEL

Stay warm in the frozen north by surrounding yourself in ice. No, really

Usually when we travel, the accommodation is at best an enhancement of the overall experience. In some rare cases, it is the solo reason to travel to a destination. And then there are those temporary abodes that you build your travel itinerary around. That's the case for Sweden's ice hotels, which make use of the country's arctic temperatures for a unique stay.

Interestingly, it all began as an ice-inspired creative experience and art gallery, with the original Icehotel back in 1989, and it's this artistic endeavour that continues to drive the popular frozen hotel. The hotel itself sits beside the Torne river, which is the source of the frozen blocks

used to craft a new hotel each and every year. Once winter comes, the team carve the icy bricks from the river and use them to shape a new experience, pushing their creativity and artistic visions to the limit as they conceive new ways to astound visitors.

But make no mistake, this is more than an igloo. Artists from around the globe are called upon to impart their ideas into each room, swapping paints and paintbrushes for snow, ice and a chisel. The result is a collection of suites each distinct from one another, rife with snow-based sculptures and intricate carvings all held in place by the tundra temps. Even the beds are made of

ice! There's perhaps something unnerving about willingly sleeping in below-freezing temperatures, but you'll be kitted out with an expedition-worthy sleeping bag to ensure a solid night's rest.

Naturally there are limitations to such a setup, but the accompanying cabins provide showers, safe storage and even heat, which you won't find among the frosted walls of the hotel itself.

Sleeping while encapsulated by ice is a moment you'll not forget any time soon, but what's really special about the experience in Jukkasjärvi is just how temporal it really is: come spring, the hotel will melt away into the river once again, and with it the place you slept soundly for a night.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Loaned outerwear like snowsuits and gloves are provided, but don't forget thermal underlayers, thick socks and a warm hat.

Location:

Jukkasjärvi,
Sweden

Time zone:

UTC +1

Best time to visit:

Winter.



Sleeping on a bed of ice isn't likely something you want to do all the time, but once in a lifetime perhaps

10 STAY WITH A LOCAL FAMILY

To truly understand the culture of a place, you must meet its people



Aboriginal Australians AUSTRALIA

Receiving an Aboriginal perspective on Australia is arguably more eye-opening than most other experiences of this ilk, simply for the vast contrast between their understanding of the country and the Western influences that shape it nowadays. There are myriad tours available that each offer something new and unique to that particular group of indigenous people, but staying among the traditional Aboriginal huts and learning about the history, culture and values will teach you so much more. Whether it's why they won't climb Uluru or how to survive the bush, the insight you'll gain is far more ancient and revered than any non-Aboriginal tour of Australia.

Chiang Rai THAILAND

The people of Thailand are incredibly varied in their individual practices, experiences and cultures, and so there are a variety of options for staying with a local family here that enable you to truly immerse yourself in such an eclectic country. One particularly interesting option is a multi-day stay from Chiang Rai, where you will head out and stay with the Karen people and live without electricity in the wilderness of Thailand. As part of your stay, you may well spend time among the rice fields, collect herbs and fruits from the forests, or perhaps even handcraft with high-quality silver for a genuine view of an off-grid tribal life.



Amazon Tribe SOUTH AMERICA

With more than 400 tribes living among the Amazonian rainforest, many with their own cultures and languages, it's not surprising that it is a way of life that is quite unlike our own. But it's a part of the world that is constantly under threat, whether by loggers destroying these tribes' homeland or well-to-do visitors interrupting their purposefully isolated lifestyles. That's why many local home stays among the Amazon can be beneficial to the populace and are typically run by locals. This way, tourists will gain a deeper understanding of what it means to live in such a wild place, while still helping to keep a burdened people going.



BE RESPECTFUL

Remember that while you might be getting a novel experience and might find the cultures and traditions practiced by the remote tribes of the world to be unusual and alien, these are the daily rituals of the locals you are choosing to stay with and you should respect that.

11

CLIMB EL CAPITAN

Join the best climbers in the USA as they scale Yosemite's most famous rock

Look at the hulking great chunk of granite rising from El Capitan Meadow in Yosemite National Park and you'll wonder how anybody ever reaches the top. El Capitan soars nearly three times higher than the Empire State Building and is a place of pilgrimage for wildlife watchers, photographers and, perhaps more than any other group, climbers.

The Nose, a prow of rock sticking out from the middle of El Capitan's face, was first conquered in 1958. It took three climbers 47 days to lay out a route, and they spread their climbs over 18 months. The first continuous climb occurred two years later and lasted a week. Nowadays, El Capitan is regularly conquered. Alex Honnold completed the first free solo – a climb without any ropes or harnesses – in June 2017. The following year, he paired with Tommy Caldwell for the fastest ever ascent, reaching the summit in less than two hours.

If you fancy joining the club of climbers who have scaled El Capitan, seek out the Yosemite Mountaineering School and Guide Service. They cater for all ability levels, from experts who want a few local pointers, to beginners who are literally learning the ropes. However, don't expect to tackle the Nose unless you are a skilled and experienced climber.

Don't worry if you're not a modern-day Edmund Hillary or Tenzing Norgay – the peaks of Yosemite aren't closed off to you. A 20.5-kilometre (12.8-mile) hiking route to the top of El Capitan leaves from Yosemite Falls and is a popular option for those who want to see the summit without rope burn on their hands. Nearby Half Dome is taller than El Capitan and is perhaps even more photogenic. It also has a hiking trail to the top; a strenuous 27-kilometre (17-mile) route that passes two waterfalls.

Picturesque Yosemite covers more than 3,000sq/km (1,150sq/mi)



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:
 Be prepared for long days – climbing school lessons are typically seven and a half hours long.

Location:
 California, USA

Time zone:
 UTC-8

Best time to visit:
 Spring and autumn are best – not too hot or cold for climbing.

CURRENCY
 \$
 AMERICAN DOLLAR

El Capitan rises around 914m (3,000ft) from base to summit

Main image © Alamy. Inset image © Getty

12 SNORKEL WITH ORCAS

Dive into the Norwegian waters to get a closer look at these beautiful creatures

For those adventure seekers who also love to see wildlife in their natural habitat, snorkelling with orcas is an absolute must on the bucket list. Norway is the only place in the world where you can safely snorkel with orcas and follow them as they swim through the fjords, tracking the herring migration.

The length of a tour can vary from a few hours to a week, which will hopefully ensure that you have plenty of chance to see these majestic animals. As well as orcas, you may also be lucky enough to see other types of whales, including

humpbacks and fin whales, and other sea life as you explore the fjords. When you do leave the boat to sink into the depths of the water, there will be a good chance that you'll see orcas swimming by you in close proximity!

You will not need diving qualifications for a snorkelling excursion like this. However, it's important to understand that the weather can get choppy, light conditions can be poor, and the tour can be challenging. You also need to be physically fit, a strong swimmer, comfortable in open water and on boats, and ensure that you

are accompanied by experts who are prepared for the weather conditions. It is also important to wear several layers to keep you warm while you are out on the boat.

This adventure is definitely not for the faint-hearted, nor is it the most purse-friendly, and you should be aware that there is no guarantee you will even encounter the orcas. Yet this does not change the fact that snorkelling with orcas is a once-in-a-lifetime experience – and there is even the possibility that you will get to see the northern lights!



You may be lucky enough to see the northern lights while searching for orcas

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:
Bring a warm dry suit and suitable clothes for the experience, as it will be extremely cold!

Location:
Norway

Time zone:
UTC +1

Best time to visit:
November to January, during peak orca season.

CURRENCY
Kr
NORWEGIAN KRONER

Route 66 has inspired many books, movies, television shows and songs

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Try to limit your driving to just six hours each day to ensure you take in the sights en route.

Location:

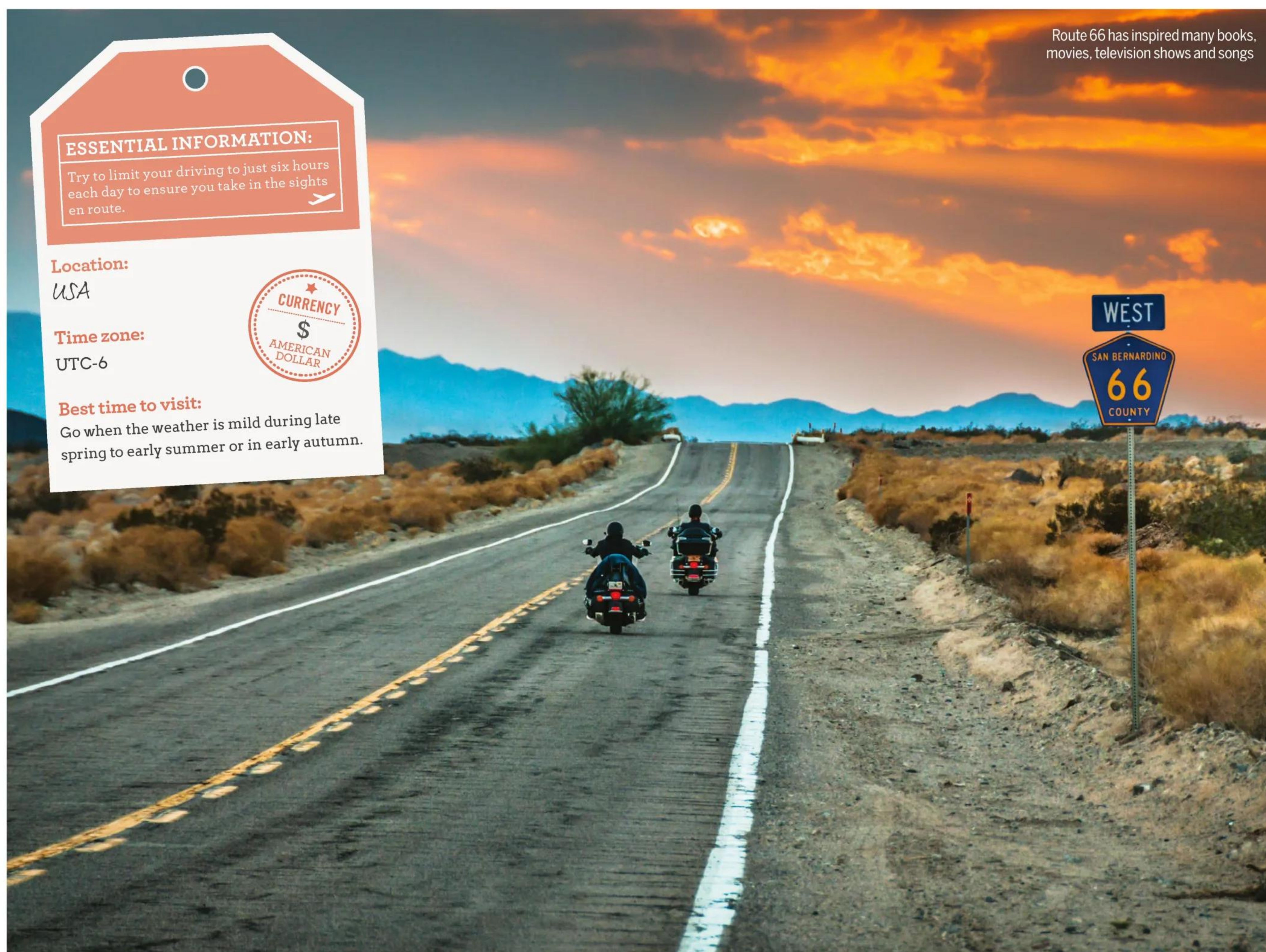
USA

Time zone:

UTC-6

Best time to visit:

Go when the weather is mild during late spring to early summer or in early autumn.



13 DRIVE ROUTE 66

Hit America's historic Mother Road and travel across land that can appear frozen in time

Driving Route 66 is sure to be an unforgettable experience. With 3,940 kilometres (2,448 miles) ahead of you (should you decide to embark upon its entire length), it's a journey that takes you through a host of diverse and exciting locations, each one offering the chance to view many amazing sights while catching up with lots of interesting and diverse people.

Designated in 1926, Route 66 connects eight states and crosses three time zones, taking drivers from Chicago to Los Angeles. As such, you can venture from Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. And, if you've ever wanted to 'see' America, this is just about one of the best ways of doing so.

Not that it's as straightforward as you may imagine, but that's all part of this epic adventure. Route 66 (nicknamed America's Mother Road by author John Steinbeck in the 1939 Great Depression-era novel *The Grapes of Wrath*) was actually decommissioned in 1985, and about 15% of the road has become lost to time. Retracing the route may entail digging out a road map despite preservation efforts, but you will be helped by some signs pointing you towards the Historic Route.

Along the way you will come across a plethora of 'mom and pop' motels, a host of diners and pizza joints, and quirky towns such as Joliet, Illinois, which is known as the City of Spires for its many churches. There are also huge 'Muffler Man' statues, such as the rocket-holding Gemini Giant,

which reaches nine metres (30 feet) tall, and the Uniroyal Gal in her Route 66 skirt and blouse.

Of course, all of that driving will be thirsty work – for your mode of transport as well as yourself. It means you're bound to stop at quite a few gas stations for refreshments and fuel along the way, but do take the time to pull up at some of the age-old ones that have long since closed – they have a fascinating history. Notable examples include Ambler's, in Dwight, Illinois, and the Insta-perfect Hackberry General Store in Hackberry, Arizona. And with bridges, the GateWay Arch in St Louis, Missouri, the world's second largest rocking chair in Fanning, the jaw-dropping scenery across cowboy territory and the vast plains of the Texas panhandle, you'll be whipping out your camera at every turn.



Experience stunning aerial views across the Great Barrier Reef



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Tighter or well-fitted clothing is best to stop it flapping violently during the jump.

Location:

North Queensland,
Australia

Time zone:

UTC+10



Best time to visit:

April to December when there are usually clear skies for skydiving.

14

SKYDIVE OVER MISSION BEACH

Take the leap over the world's largest coral reef

Skydiving is a common item on many bucket lists, and rightly so! The exhilarating experience is a major achievement for even the biggest adrenaline junkies. Nothing compares to falling from 4,500 metres (15,000 feet) towards Earth, so why not perform this often once-in-a-lifetime experience over one of the world's most stunning landscapes.

Mission Beach (Queensland, Australia) is sandwiched between ancient rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef, providing extensive views of coastline, islands and the turquoise outline of the world's most famous reef.

For around £260 (\$300), you can experience the drop from the plane at the highest altitude available (4,500 metres (15,000 feet)). This includes a tandem dive, with a 60-second freefall time. Sixty seconds may sound short, but when experiencing the intense sensations as air hits your skin and rushes past you, you will feel like you are flying for a considerable time. Shorter jumps of 2,100 metres (7,000 feet) are also available at Mission Beach.

Skydiving is likely the closest sensation your body will ever encounter to truly flying. As you plummet towards the sands of Mission Beach,

prepare for a floating feeling above the clouds. Your body and mind won't forget this experience in a hurry, but be sure to include the video package option if you want to relive the flight endlessly in digital form – and to serve as proof to your friends, of course!

After the parachute opens, you will have more time to soak up the stunning views and regain your breath, while your experienced tandem partner points out key areas of the coastline. Then, to welcome you back to ground level, land your feet on the beach's soft and welcoming white sand.

Although a third of the walls are no longer around, that still leaves so much of this world wonder intact

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure you take food and water on your adventure, and wear good hiking shoes.

Location:

China

Time zone:

UTC+8

Best time to visit:

To avoid the stifling heat, visit the Great Wall during the spring.



15

WALK THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

You can't actually see it from the Moon but it still provides an adventure that's out of this world

Nobody would expect you to hike the entire length of the Great Wall, although if you had the time and the energy, it would certainly be quite some feat. After all, it stretches 21,196 kilometres (13,171 miles) in length, which means you'd end up walking half the distance of the equator. The trick, though, is to pick one section – avoiding the parts that have sadly fallen into disrepair and are still being worked on. Those close to Beijing are the most popular.

The Badaling section, for example, can be accessed by train and it's been a hit with tourists since it opened to all in 1957. It benefits from a host of amenities including a cable car and market stalls, but while that means it can

feel chaotic at times, it's still one of the most impressive sections. It's the part that many leaders and dignitaries have visited so you'd also be following in some impressive footsteps.

Although construction on the wall began as early as the 7th century BCE, this part was built during the Ming Dynasty around 1504 CE to offer protection. Indeed, this was the era when the wall began to take shape as it zig-zagged across the landscape, with horses able to travel across its wide path and soldiers able to enjoy the jaw-dropping views that remain as breathtaking today.

You'll certainly have plenty to see. The wall as a whole rises as high as 14 metres (46 feet) and it reaches an altitude of 1,439 metres (4,721 feet)

in the northwest Beijing suburb of Huanglouyuan, giving good vantage points and incredible views over the surrounding countryside. While there are numerous steps to navigate, you can stop to admire the many watchtowers created from brick, stone and wood.

Notable sights include the Storehouse Tower of the Jinshanling Great Wall, which was once storage space for food, weapons and hay. But watch out too for barrier walls that offered protection for soldiers. Try to visit some of the unrestored parts if you can, though. They give a glimpse of the work that went into crafting the wall – a feat that, as you'll see, is as inspiring as the end result.

16

WHITE-WATER RAFT

Go with the flow down the wild Zambezi River in Zambia

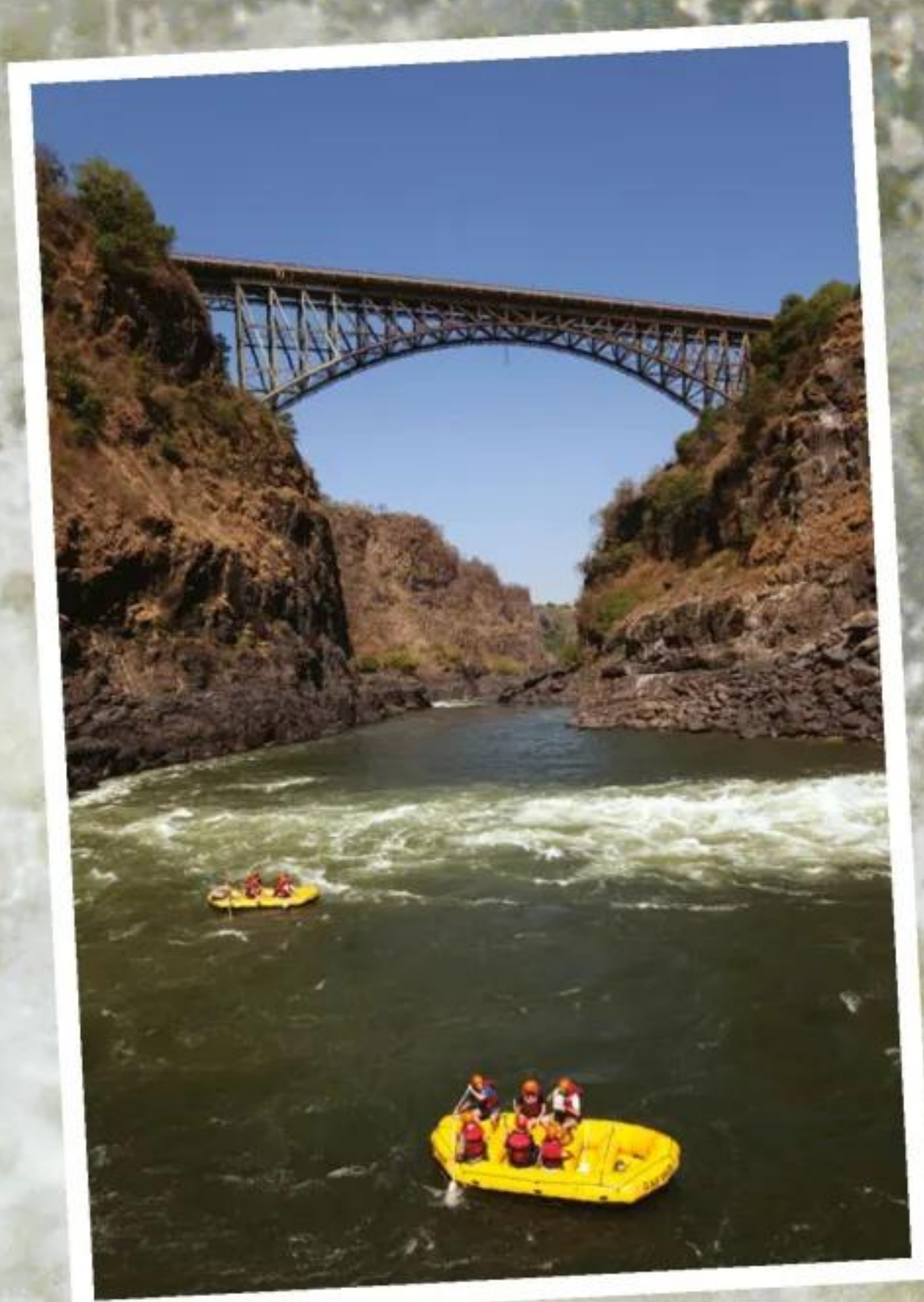
The Boiling Pot... Devil's Toilet Bowl... Commercial Suicide... Gnashing Jaws of Death... Oblivion... Just a few names of the rapids you'll encounter on the Zambezi River while white-water rafting. If these terrifying monikers that suggest a watery death don't put you off, you'll actually have the time of your life as you navigate part of this 2,574-kilometre (1,600-mile) free-flowing river, affectionately referred to as the 'Slambezi'. Yes, you'll probably fall out of your raft... but you'll also fall in love with this extreme, frothy sport. Sure, your raft will likely

flip... but so will your stomach – with adrenaline-fuelled excitement.

With Class 3 (Intermediate) to 5 (Expert) rapids interspersed with peaceful pools, the section of the Zambezi River below the Victoria Falls is widely considered as one of the best places in the world to white-water raft. If you get flung from your boat, just enjoy the thrilling ride until you reach one of the calmer pools, where you can marvel at the magical scenery of the steep-sided Batoka Gorge, before you're hoisted back in the raft for more rapid running.

There are various tour operators that host rafting trips along the Zambezi – some for a few hours, some for a full day, and some for a number of days, with overnight camping in remote spots with no light pollution, perfect for stargazing. Prices vary from company to company but expect to pay around £100 (\$120) for a full day. You will need to hike down the gorge to reach the water, so make sure you wear sturdy shoes that you don't mind getting wet – flip-flops are a no-no. Once you're in your raft, get ready to paddle... paddle... PADDLE!

The Zambezi is seen as one of the best rivers for white-water rafting in the world



© Alamy

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Apply plenty of sunscreen before setting off – particularly to the tops of your thighs.

Location:

Batoka Gorge,
Zambia

Time zone:

UTC+2



Best time to visit:

The water level changes throughout the year. Low water is July to January; high water is February to June. High water flows faster, giving a more rip-roaring ride.

17

DESCEND INTO A VOLCANO

Take a journey into the depths of Iceland's famed Thríhnúkagígur

Just a half-hour drive from the centre of Iceland's capital Reykjavík lies the dormant volcano Thríhnúkagígur, the home of the Inside the Volcano tour. Whether you're into volcanoes and geology or not, it's well worth a visit if you're ever in Iceland – and it's the only place in the world where you can have this one-of-a-kind experience.

After getting picked up from your hotel (which is included in the price), you'll make your way across a lava field to get to base camp. Here you'll be fitted with a helmet and harness before

you explore the crater of the volcano and then descend 120 metres (400 feet) to the bottom in an open cable lift.

You'll be so close to the magma that you'll be able to feel the intense heat and pressure that still lingers from Thríhnúkagígur's last eruption, which took place more than 4,000 years ago. You'll also get a close-up view of the bizarre rock formations left behind, with vibrant yellows, blues, violets and oranges.

Even when you're there, it's difficult to imagine the true scale of the volcano. The crater is deep

enough to hold enormous monuments such as New York's Statue of Liberty, and the chamber's ground space is about the size of three basketball courts.

The £265 (\$313) price for the tour includes transfers to and from your hotel, as well as a traditional Icelandic meat soup (or a vegetarian equivalent) and a tea or coffee. All you need to remember is a pair of good hiking boots for the rocky trail, and clothing to protect you from the unpredictable weather. You'll probably want to take a camera, too!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

While no knowledge of hiking or climbing is required, you will need to have a moderate fitness level.

Location:

Reykjavík, Iceland

Time zone:

UTC

Best time to visit:

Tours take place between 15 May and 20 October.



It takes six minutes to be lowered to the bottom of the crater





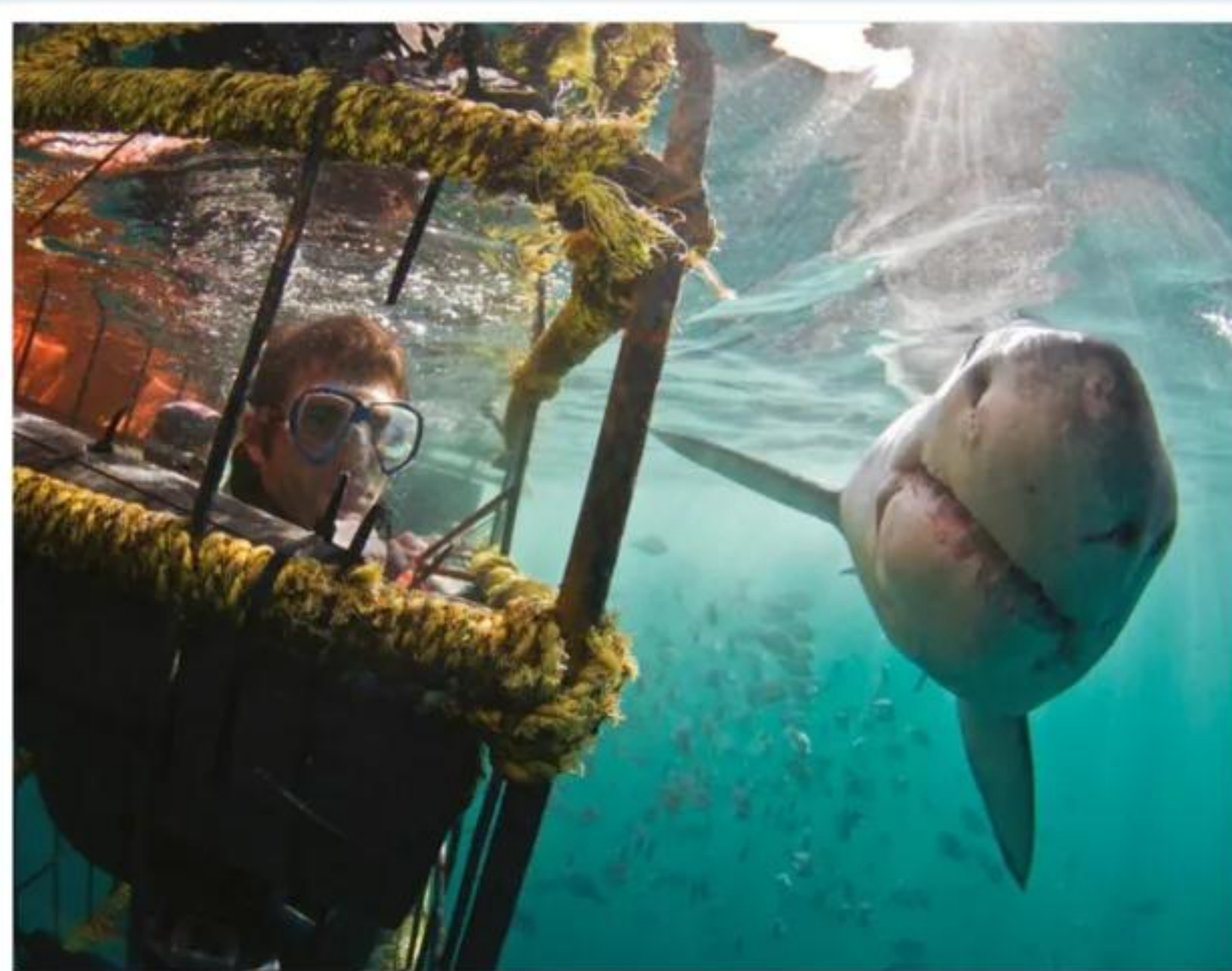
ETHICAL DIVING

Not all shark diving companies are equal. Try to pick a company that supports research and conservation efforts, and mitigates its impact on the environment by using cages without sharp edges and avoids flooding the sea with chum.

Cages aren't always necessary for shark dives – many species are happy to share the waters with humans

18 SWIM WITH SHARKS

Go face to face with the ocean's most magnificent and misunderstood predators



Gansbaai, SOUTH AFRICA

More than 100 species of sharks prowl the waters off South Africa where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. A shallow channel off Gansbaai in Western Cape known as Shark Alley has become renowned for cage diving, where six or so customers are dropped into the water in a protective metal cage to view copper and great white sharks as they prowl for prey. Some cages plunge a few metres down and require scuba diving experience; others sit on the surface and are suitable for snorkellers. However you view them, fear often makes us forget the majesty of these serene creatures as they silently glide past.

Isla Guadalupe, MEXICO

Don't confuse Isla Guadalupe in the Pacific with the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Part of the Mexican state, it lies 241 kilometres (130 miles) off Baja California, and its location usually means calm water and excellent visibility – perfect conditions for cage diving. Multi-day diving trips take place in the summer when great white sharks congregate for mating season. Some of the biggest females, typically late arrivals in October, are the size of off-road vehicles. The island is a nature reserve, and landing permits are almost impossible to secure, so divers usually stay aboard ship – but that's all the better for multiple trips in the cage.



Fish Rock Cave, AUSTRALIA

Sand tiger sharks (known as grey nurse sharks in Australia) live in Fish Rock Cave all year, but summer is a particularly great time to see them since they tend to rest near the entrance, 12 metres (40 feet) below the surface. You'll need to be a confident scuba diver – the cave is 125 metres (410 feet) long and currents can be quite strong – but the marine life inside is awesome and also includes wobbegong sharks, black rays, giant cuttlefish and black cod. Outside the cave, the waters off northern New South Wales are home to moray eels, blue groper and turtles.

19

EXPLORE THE AMAZON

The South American rainforest is a dream location for wildlife-loving travellers and thrill-seekers alike

It's difficult to wrap your head around just how big the world's largest tropical rainforest is. The Amazon straddles nine different countries and the UK could fit within its borders 27 times over.

Whichever part you're visiting – be it Brazil in the south, Ecuador in the north or Peru in the west – certain aspects are common to any Amazon adventure. Odds are you'll stay in an ecolodge. Of course, these vary considerably in terms of facilities and cost, but their primary

benefit is the same across the luxury spectrum: pitching guests into the heart of the jungle.

Just reaching these remote digs (be prepared for blissful internet blackout) can feel like an odyssey in itself, involving prop-powered planes, ever-bumpier roads/tracks, and motorised canoes whizzing up snaking rivers and oxbow lakes lined with impenetrable vegetation.

While each lodge offers its own roster of activities, they will all involve the waterways

that here serve as a road system. Water-based outings include wildlife-spotting cruises, kayaking, paddleboarding or even going for a swim in the murky waters – that is, if the guide manages to convince you that the caimans, piranhas and anacondas don't like to hunt there!

On terra firma, trail treks enable you to explore this complex habitat up close and find out more about the plants that have given us many modern medicines as well as endangered species like mahogany. You'll be let in on some local secrets, too: sample ants that taste of citrus, discover how difficult it is to fire a blow-dart, and literally learn the ropes of how to clamber up into the canopy.

A night-time hike is particularly special, wandering by just moonlight and head-torches, bombarded by the cacophony of croaks, chirps and shrieks as nocturnal critters take over from the day-shift. Look out for poison-dart frogs hopping around your feet and the gleaming eyes of snakes or larger beasts like tapirs and jaguars.

One of the best things about an Amazon trip is that you're in charge of your own endorphin levels. If you'd rather have an afternoon lounging in a hammock reading a book, then nobody is going to judge you. There may even be mini-adventures to be had at the lodge, such as scaling a watch-tower that offers a front-row seat to a treetop soap opera or fishing from the riverbank – just be sure to watch your fingers if you reel in a piranha!

Enjoy a canopy adventure in the Tambopata National Reserve in the Peruvian Amazon

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Even a pair of miniature binoculars will really improve observations of canopy-dwelling wildlife such as sloths, monkeys and parrots.

Location:

South America

Time zone:

UTC-3 to UTC-5

Best time to visit:

Hot and humid year round. July to December is drier, but the first half of the year is slightly cooler.



Discover stunning accommodation right in the heart of the rainforest



Take a relaxing, wildlife-spotting cruise along the Amazon River



All images © Getty. (Top right credit: SL Photography)



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

The maximum number of passengers tends to be six. Try to shotgun the seat in the front beside the pilot for the best uninterrupted views.

Location:
Arizona, USA

Time zone:
UTC-7

Best time to visit:
March to May is generally dry and warm, before the intense summer heat kicks in.



20 HELICOPTER INTO THE GRAND CANYON

Unlock your inner action hero and experience a familiar landmark from a whole new perspective

No trip to western USA is complete without a stop at the iconic Grand Canyon. The downside when a location reaches such heady heights of fame is that you have to share it – with a *lot* of others. We're talking some five million visitors each year, which is around a million more than the Empire State Building and half a million more than the Statue of Liberty.

The vast majority drive here, pay the permit to enter the park (£29/\$35 per vehicle), take the same-old snaps of vistas like Eagle Point from the clifftops, then leave. A percentage fork out a little extra to stroll on the Skywalk, which since 2007 has enabled people to put their vertigo capacity to the test with a glass-bottomed walkway that juts out over the abyss.

But there is a sure-fire way to dodge the crowds – and join an exclusive club to enjoy this natural wonder in heart-thumping style: hop on a helicopter. If it's your first time riding a chopper, even strapping in and experiencing the deafening reverberations of the rotors is enough to get the endorphins flowing... It's hard to describe the rush of lifting off and plunging over the edge into that red-sandstone void. Why settle for a pretty 2D photo when the Grand Canyon can be a fully immersive 3D action movie?

There are many tours available offering various extras, whether it's a romantic sunset, a picnic at the base or a boat ride along the Colorado River – the creator of this giant gorge whose ebbs and flows continue to shape the landscape. As you

drift with the current, sheer cliffs hundreds of metres tall looming above, you're treated to yet another perspective that those who stay on the rim are missing out on. You'll end on a high with the chopper whisking you back up.

Expect to pay anywhere from £165 to beyond £415 (\$200-\$500), depending on what's included. At the higher end of the budget, the helicopter may even pick you up and drop you off from your hotel in Las Vegas – which is a couple of hours' drive away. This means that as well as seeing the Grand Canyon in style, you'll get a bird's-eye view of the barren Nevada desert, the Hoover Dam and the showstopping architecture and dazzling illuminations of Sin City all from your premier seat in the sky.

21 CYCLE IN THE FRENCH ALPS

Conquer challenging climbs while absorbing the epic views

If you're an experienced cyclist who is up for a new challenge, taking a route through the French Alps could be classed as an essential adventure. The Alps always feature along the Tour de France route, providing incredibly technical sections for even the most elite athletes. Following in their footsteps – or track marks – you can take a similar or more leisurely route through some of the most famous mountain ranges, allowing for a similar alpine course that you can succeed in too.

The French alps provide a dramatic setting for hikers and cyclists alike, as steep rugged crags meet at refreshing streams and often snow-capped peaks tower high above you. It is one of the few places that makes you feel both on top of the world and mightily tiny.

With climbs up to 2,304 metres (7,559 feet), Col de la Loze was one of the highest points in the 2020 Tour de France, and an extremely popular cycling location for those wanting a higher level of difficulty.

Col de la Croix de Fer is another favourite among most cyclists, with the main mountain reaching an altitude of 2,067 metres (6,781 feet). The entire distance to the summit is 29.5 kilometres (18.3 miles), with the average gradient being 5.5%. By following this route, you will cycle past two large dams and their resulting lakes (Lac du Verney and the Lac de Grand Maison), which are worth stopping to admire.

To contrast these mammoth peaks, routes around Lake Annecy offer a flat, leisurely ride

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure you bring spares, such as spare tubes, tyre levers and a puncture repair kit. ➔

Location:

*Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur/
Rhône-Alpes, France*

Time zone:

UTC+1



Best time to visit:

May to September when there is dry weather and before the snow hits mountain tops.





if you wish for one less demanding. This is a particularly good choice for family excursions, providing picturesque alpine views, while remaining easily accessible and manageable for younger cyclists.

Both mountain and road bike tours are available at around £345 (\$395) for three days. This option means that experts have planned your trip for you and can guide and advise you about the most challenging sections.



Many areas of the Alps include a network of winding roads for road cyclists



Go off the beaten track for stunning views of the peaks and lakes of the Alps



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Be sure to check the schedules of cruise ships so that you can avoid overcrowded islands.

Location:
Caribbean, North America

Time zone:
UTC-5 and UTC-4

Best time to visit:
December to June when the heat is less intense.

CURRENCY
VARIOUS CURRENCIES

Explore some of the Caribbean's lesser-known highlights

22

SAIL THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN

Choose from thousands of islands as you tour the tropics

The beaches and coastlines of the Caribbean's 7,000 islands are widely recognised locations for an idyllic retreat. However, so many of the best hidden gems are inaccessible by car. To achieve a tropical coast adventure away from the crowds, the vehicle to best enhance your stop-offs is a boat.

For those confident in hiring a boat to sail themselves, the Caribbean waters are usually tame. As long as you avoid hurricane seasons, the clear, inviting Caribbean Sea is easy to navigate and perfect for beginners. Instead of sticking to the rigid schedule of a cruise ship, you can seek out lesser-known locations at your own pace. Want to stop and watch the dolphins play or take a spontaneous swim? Sometimes the best experiences are those you didn't plan for, and this method of exploration allows for that.

Some of the top and most popular islands and island chains you may wish to navigate through

during your adventure include the Guadeloupe islands and their luscious forests, the mountainous Saint Lucia or the Lesser Antilles islands – featuring Aruba, one of the sunniest islands in the entire region. You should expect to pay at least £315 (\$363) per day for boat rentals in the Caribbean.

If the thought of being alone on the waves fills you with fear, rather than adventure, you might want to consider hiring a boat with a skipper (if you can afford to spend an additional fee). This means you don't have to miss out on the freedom of the sea, while knowing your boat is in safe hands. This person will not only sail you safely from island to island, but will likely be an expert of the area, providing you with helpful tips and insider recommendations. Whether you go it alone or are accompanied, little will make you feel more like an adventurer than stepping off your vessel onto your chosen islands for the first time.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Wrap up in layers so that you can remove outer items of clothing if you get too warm.

Location:

Norway and Sweden

Time zone:

UTC +2



Best time to visit:

The summer months of June, July and August mean you can make the most of the longer daylight hours.

“You have the option of combining your snowmobile experience with other activities”

Snowmobiling can be enjoyed by children and non-drivers too, who can travel behind in a second seat or a sled

23

SNOWMOBILE IN SCANDINAVIA

Explore the region's spectacular countryside with an adrenaline-filled snowmobile experience

Invented in the early 1900s, snowmobiles are often considered the fastest way to travel around the wintry landscapes of Scandinavia. Commonly used across the region in countries such as Norway and Sweden, snowmobiling is a fantastic way to explore the expansive forests and lakes up close.

The cost of a snowmobile trip will often depend on the length of the excursion. Shorter trips of two hours will typically cost around £100 (\$117), while longer and more expansive trips can cost up to £250 (\$294) for a few hours. You also

have the option of combining your snowmobile experience with other activities such as ice fishing, wilderness dining, and opportunities to view the iconic northern lights. Knowledgeable guides will assist you during the excursion and advise you on the local rules and safety precautions. It's worth bearing in mind that trips can sometimes be altered or cancelled at late notice due to adverse weather conditions such as hazardous snowfall.

In order to drive a snowmobile, it is usually required that you are over 18 years of age and

hold a valid driving license in your country of residence. Those without licenses or accompanied by children can also join in the fun, with some operators offering family snowmobile rides where children and non-drivers can travel in a snowmobile-pulled sled. Others even have mini snowmobile experiences for little ones.

If it's the emissions that you're worried about, head to Rovaniemi in Finland, where you can try short-range electric snowmobiles. These silent vehicles offer a unique experience different from their gas-fuelled counterparts!

24

CAMEL RIDE IN THE DESERT

Jaunt off into the sunset on the back of an Egyptian camel

There are many places throughout Egypt where you have the chance to channel your inner Lawrence of Arabia and climb atop a camel to explore the desert. Hurghada, Sharm el Sheik and Dahab are popular spots, but perhaps the most famous place in the country to 'get the hump' is at the Giza Pyramids. As the Great Pyramid is one of the Ancient Wonders of the World, the area is teeming with tourists, but once you're on your camel, the guide will lead you further into the desert – and away from

the crowds – where you'll be treated to some unforgettable views.

Camels in Egypt come equipped with either single or double saddles, so you can enjoy the experience with a pal if you like. Wherever you choose to ride, be sure to agree on the price (and the route) with your guide before the adventure begins. Haggling is expected in Egypt and you often have to keep your wits about you to ensure you don't pay over the odds. For a 30-minute ride, expect to pay around £17

(\$20). You may also want to leave a token of your appreciation after the ride, as tipping is standard practice in Egypt.

Camel riding is often included as part of a desert safari, which involves various other activities, such as visiting a Bedouin-style camp, watching a belly dancing show, dune bashing and stargazing. Evening is a wonderful time to take such a tour as it won't be as hot as earlier in the day, and you'll get to soak up a gorgeous sunset.

Happy hump day!



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

When riding a camel, remember to sway with it, not against it, for a more comfortable experience.

Location:

Various, Egypt

Time zone:

UTC +2



Best time to visit:

October to April are good months as the temperature is cooler. Sunrise and sunset are stunning times for a camel ride.

A camel ride is a great way to escape the hordes of tourists



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Visitors can learn more about Sámi culture at various museums in the town of Inari.



Location:

Lapland, Finland

Time zone:

UTC+2



Best time to visit:

August to April for best views of the lights.

Lapland offers a wide array of accommodation options, designed to give guests sweeping views of the lights above

25

SEE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

The home of Santa Claus, Lapland hosts the best views of nature's most otherworldly spectacle

Green fingers stretch out across the rich vastness of space, projecting a brilliant luminous presence across the night sky. They burst into curtains of colour, intersected by sweeping nets of yellow and purple beams, protruding in all directions. Bouncing off the snow-laced ground, they return to the night, repeating like a hall of mirrors.

The aurora borealis, better known as the northern lights, are a sight to behold; an elusive series of marvels that defy all attempts to encompass them. And yet, for the determined traveller, for much of the year, they are within reach. Several countries fall within the auroral zone, where the lights are most commonly seen,

between 60 and 75-degrees latitude. While they can be observed from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia, they are best enjoyed from Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Lapland, in northern Finland, is considered the quintessential place to observe the phenomenon. While southern Finland can observe it for up to 20 nights a year, in Lapland the lights dance across the sky every second night from August to April.

As well as being at just the right latitude, the land of Father Christmas is also devoid of artificial light, enabling the vacuum of space to create a canvas, upon which the magnetic marvel can truly shine.

After a day spent reindeer sledding, there are many ways to fall asleep beneath the northern lights, even in the dead of winter. Located next to Lake Inari, for example, the Wilderness Hotel Nellim's Aurora Bubbles offer up panoramic glass-walled views of the lights.

Elsewhere, an array of modern domes, huts and igloos present stunningly stylish accommodation options, all centred around unrivalled views of the great outdoors – so you don't have to search too hard to spot the 'Green Lady' in all her majesty. And while you enjoy Mother Nature's greatest show, remember not to point, as local Sámi legend claims that the lights are the dancing souls of the dead.

26

RUN THE COLOR RUN FESTIVAL

Embrace fun, happiness and health in the colourful city of Mumbai

The Color Run, founded in 2011, is an event that is all about having fun and making memories while promoting health and happiness. Referred to as the 'Happiest 5k on the Planet', it is a five-kilometre (3.1-mile) race that makes running accessible to almost everyone – regardless of ability – and is a great adventure for people from all walks of life.

All participants of the Color Run have to wear white clothing and as you run (or walk!) along the course, you are doused with bright, colourful

powder by people lining the course. When the Color Run has ended, there is a Finish Festival for all participants and spectators, with music, dancing, activity booths and so on, allowing you to let loose and celebrate your achievement with your fellow runners. If you don't feel you got hit with enough colour during the run, more colour throws are held at the Finish Festival, to ensure that you go home covered from head to toe.

The Color Run was inspired by many events across the world, as well as festivals such as Holi,

the Hindu festival of colours. It has been held in more than 200 cities in 40 countries around the world but, arguably, the ultimate experience is to run the Color Run in Mumbai, India (which hosted its first Color Run in 2019). Not only can you immerse yourself in the fascinating culture of India, but you can also take the opportunity to learn about the Holi festival and why it is celebrated. The Color Run is a unique event that promises to be an unforgettable experience for any keen adventurer.

People celebrate the festival of Holi in Mumbai



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Take a small, clear bag to protect your phone, and towels to cover your car seats for the journey home!

Location:
Mumbai, India

Time zone:
UTC+5:30

Best time to visit:
Check exact date of the event.



27

EXPLORE UNDERWATER DEPTHS ON A SCUBA DIVE

From ancient shipwrecks to bustling coral reefs, there's a whole world to discover in the briny sea...

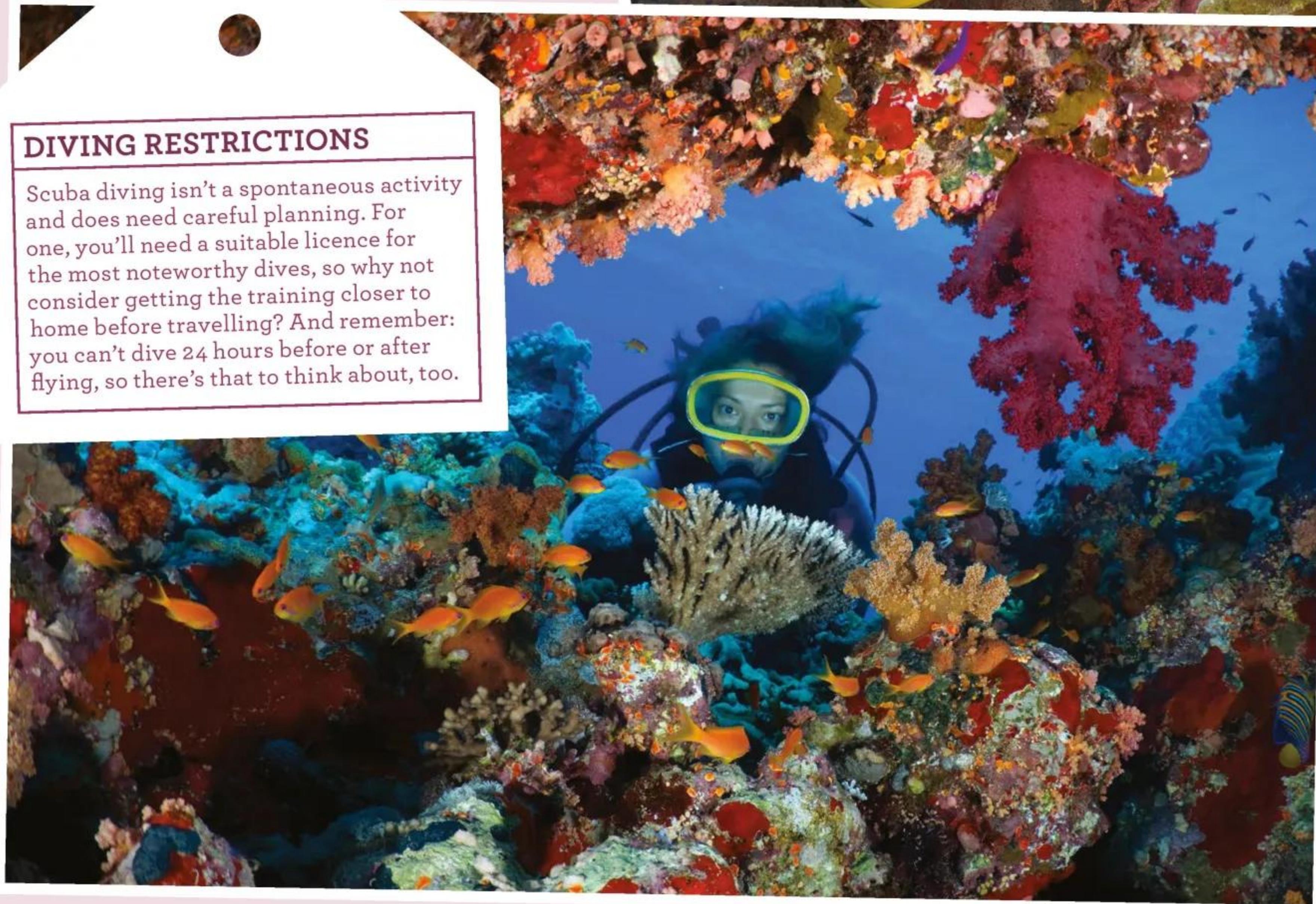
Great Barrier Reef, **AUSTRALIA**

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral system spreading across some 344,000 square kilometres (133,000 square miles), and one of Australia's most iconic natural spaces. There's plenty to see across this smattering of islands, even if the most you're able to do is go snorkelling, but for the avid diver you'll have an abundance of natural phenomena to see. In addition to the varieties of colourful coral, there is a plethora of tropical fish, a high chance of spying dolphins and all sorts of other rarely seen marine life. If you are in Australia, make this a must-do experience.



DIVING RESTRICTIONS

Scuba diving isn't a spontaneous activity and does need careful planning. For one, you'll need a suitable licence for the most noteworthy dives, so why not consider getting the training closer to home before travelling? And remember: you can't dive 24 hours before or after flying, so there's that to think about, too.



Red Sea, **MIDDLE EAST**

It's perhaps the variety on offer that makes the Red Sea such a popular destination for scuba divers. It has it all, from those ever-enticing reefs, swimming with sharks or exploring underwater wrecks – there's even the odd military tank to find at the bottom

of the sea. Since it's so vast, you'll have no problem finding an awe-inspiring dive location that fits your scuba training, or you could make it a holiday destination to get that licence you've always dreamt of. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced diver, the Red Sea caters for you.

Great Blue Hole, **BELIZE**

With a population of 330,000 and a country that is just 297 kilometres (185 miles) long and 110 kilometres (68 miles) wide, it's the natural world that is at the forefront of a trip to Belize. That's certainly true of its waters, which encompass more than 400 islands off the east coast of South America. The most iconic of dives here is the Great Blue Hole, which is the largest of its kind due to the 300-metre (984-foot) opening into the depths below. Even if you didn't know what this place was, you've likely seen a photo of it already: that's how iconic a dive this is.



28

WALK AROUND ULURU

This colour-changing, sacred rock is the heart of Australia

Even from a distance, the aesthetic power of this monolith is significant. The landmark stands 348 metres (1,141 feet) above the flat, desolate Australian outback. As impressive as this rocky beast is in sight, there is more to this isolated mountain than meets the eye.

For local Anangu Aboriginal people, Uluru is the centre of the universe. Some of the rock paintings seen on the surface were etched onto it tens of thousands of years ago, providing

an idea of how deep-rooted its importance is. When visiting Uluru, it's vital you don't climb onto the rock, as this is deeply upsetting for Aboriginal Australians who use the rock as a place of worship. Instead, take the peaceful ten-kilometre (six-mile) base walk, which provides stunning 360-degree views of the rock and its surrounding scenery, and look out for the varying types of bush plant that grow at different parts around the rock's circumference.

A ticket to enter the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park will cost around £22 (\$25), and will grant you access for three consecutive days.

Depending on the time of day you visit Uluru, it will have a different colour. It is considered to be at its most beautiful at sunrise, when it takes on a vibrant red, and sunset when it becomes tinged with violet hues. For the majority of the day, the rock blends in more with the surroundings, displaying a dusty orange appearance.

“For local Anangu Aboriginal people, Uluru is the centre of the universe”

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

In warmer months you should buy a fly net for your face to avoid being bitten throughout the day.

Location:

Northern Territory,
Australia

Time zone:

UTC +9:30



Best time to visit:

Between May and September, when temperatures usually don't exceed 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Be sure to check out any restrictions or limitations with the parasail company you go with, including age and weight. ✈️

Location:

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Time zone:

UTC-3



Best time to visit:

Between December and March for the warmer season.

It's perhaps not as extreme as some other seaside sports, but it's definitely a great way to get a new perspective on the landscape

29

PARASAIL AT COPACABANA

The best way to get the Brazilian sea air in your hair

When it comes down to it, Rio de Janeiro is arguably one of the top destinations for tourism in the world. It has it all: from glorious beaches to awesome mountains, iconic landmarks to grand parties, delectable food and great local company. You could visit for weeks and do something different every single day.

The beach at Copacabana is likely to be on most to-do lists in Rio, if not for its white sands and clear waters, then just to sing along to the Barry Manilow song inspired by the destination.

But there's a lot of impressive coastline to see in the area, and you won't get a much better opportunity to take it all in than from the skies on a parasail tour. These tandem trips will have you gliding through the air like a human kite as you're ferried around the waters of Brazil in style.

There are numerous parasailing options available from Copacabana, and in many cases they'll even provide a pick-up if you're not staying in the nearby area. Tours will usually fly you around Guanabara Bay, around the waters of

Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, and even give you a glimpse of Rio de Janeiro from the sea. And since these experiences are completely guided, it's not the sort of adrenaline-fuelled, must-do experience that requires any practice or training beforehand. All you need to do is show up for the short explanation, and then take flight. Better still, you could even find a tour service that will drop you off in downtown Rio ahead of a big night, which would certainly end the day down at the Copa in style.

30 COMPLETE THE THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE

Can you conquer the British Isles' three biggest mountains?

You can tell a true hiker by one thing: they always have a plan of which route or mountain they want to conquer next. For some it might be a list of the world's best, most inspiring hikes; others might prefer to focus on just one trip away and all the planning that might go into it. In any case, most hikers will have heard of the Three Peaks Challenge, even if there aren't many who have actually completed it.

This specific set of hikes focuses on the three biggest mountains in Great Britain, or rather the three biggest in the respective countries of England, Scotland and Wales – what with Scotland having numerous peaks taller than anything in England, Wales or Northern Ireland. There are no specifics to the challenge beyond setting the goal for yourself to reach the top of Mount Snowdon in Wales (1,085 metres/3,560 feet), Scafell Pike in England (978 metres/3,210 feet) and the great Ben Nevis in Scotland (1,345 metres/4,410 feet).

You could attempt the trio in one trip, which would mean a 743-kilometre (462-mile) drive to connect the three locations together, but if that's not compatible with your lifestyle then no one

will think any less of you if you separate the hikes into individual trips.

If you want official recognition of this challenge, however, then you'll want to aim to do it all in a single 24-hour timeframe. The official tour guides for the challenge start at Ben Nevis at 7.30am, have you complete Scafell Pike by 10.30pm the same day and get you up and down Snowdon by 7am the next morning. It's intense, but hikers are

nothing if not up for a little bit of self punishment. Alternatively, there is a more leisurely three-day challenge if you'd rather spare some time to enjoy the glorious British countryside, but in either case there's an official certificate of your achievement. The Three Peaks Challenge is one of the most iconic tests of endurance in the UK's hiking scene, but moreover it's a fabulous way to explore three very different sides of Britain.

Snowdonia in Wales is a popular destination, thanks in part to the railway that can carry the lazier traveller to the top

Ben Nevis is the tallest mountain in the British Isles



Scafell Pike is in the heart of England's beautiful Lake District



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Consider bringing something that might help you get some much needed sleep during the car rides, such as a travel neck pillow, eye mask or ear plugs. ✈️

Location:

Scotland, England and Wales, UK

Time zone:

UTC

Best time to visit:

June to September, for the best weather and visibility.



Look out for tours that enable you to see and enjoy traditional igloos

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

There are loads of activities to enjoy outside your igloo, so take plenty of warm clothes!

Location:

Lapland in Finland and Sweden

Time zone:

UTC +2 (Finland)

UTC +1 (Sweden)

Best time to visit:

January to April for the northern lights.



31 STAY IN AN IGLOO

Treat yourself to a unique stay in accommodation that is about as cool as you can get

If you want to rest your head somewhere that is smooth and crisp, then an igloo is going to suit you down to the ground. Although the temperature outside will be well below freezing, you can snuggle up inside and enjoy the unique surroundings of your temporary home.

There are a number of igloos made of snow that you can stay in dotted around Canada, in addition to some found in Finland and Sweden. You could check out those located at the Lucky Ranch Saloon in Pelkosenniemi, Finland, for example, each of which are built every year from scratch. But there are also others around Finnish and Swedish Lapland and while there's

no denying that the facilities are basic, the experience is sure to be a rich one.

With these structures, you'll obviously need to wrap up warm and eat well to stay insulated from the cold. But there are other options that provide a greater degree of comfort. The Icehotel in Sweden, for example, is worth exploring since, like the snow igloos, it's rebuilt out of snow and ice each November and December. You can read more about this hotel on page 18.

There's much to see here, from sculptures to large halls, and, as well as staying in a hotel room, you can rest in an igloo made of glass. Indeed, if you're rather taken by the idea of the shape of

an igloo rather than what it's made out of, you should check out the Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort in Finland, situated about 250 kilometres (155 miles) north of the Arctic Circle.

In this location, you're able to sleep inside one of a number of stunning glass igloos, some of which are large enough to fit up to four people. Containing a toilet and shower facilities as well as beds, they provide a high level of comfort but they also offer you an unrivalled view of sky – lie back and look up during the northern lights season to enjoy a particularly stunning backdrop. The ski slopes of the Urho Kekkonen National Park are also only a short drive away.

32

SAFARI IN AFRICA

Search for glimpses of Africa's most magnificent creatures on the quintessential safari



Serengeti National Park

The jewel in Tanzania's crown, Serengeti National Park is famed for its big cat predators – especially the lions, leopards and cheetahs who stalk the open plains. The endless savannah is vast, quieter than its counterparts and known to deliver fast and furious game-viewing. Not to be outdone by the felines, the reserve's winged residents are just as impressive, with 600 species calling the Serengeti home. While visitors can expect to pay £130 (\$150) a day to visit the park, for just £170 (\$200) more, they can also sleep among the beasts, in an array of accommodation offerings, ranging from mobile camps to luxury lodges.

Masai Mara

Sitting in southwest Kenya, Masai Mara National Reserve sprawls across 1,510 square kilometres (583 square miles) of untouched wilderness. A haven for thousands of animals, the park is home to gazelles, topi, zebra, impala, buffalo, giraffe and wildebeest. And while its most famous residents are the much-heralded Big Five, the reserve is the backdrop to one of the most spectacular shows on earth: the great migration. Each year, from July to October, 1.5 million hungry wildebeest thunder 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) through the reserve in search of rich, red oat grass to graze on. While the primordial beasts are undoubtedly the stars of the show, one million zebras and 500,000 gazelles also join the mass exodus.



Kruger National Park

Sprawled across 20,000 square kilometres (7,725 square miles), South Africa's Kruger National Park is a terrific place to spot the Big Five – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo. Those on a budget can enter the park for around £20 (\$24), and not only drive themselves if they prefer, but explore on foot with a guide. The reserve has a variety of accommodation available, ranging from tents to cottages and high-end lodges. As day slowly turns, and the sun melts into the horizon, sundowners are on hand to guide adventurers into the night; unveiling glimpses of constellations, twinkling brilliantly amidst the vastness of space.



RESPONSIBLE SAFARI

Today, the operators and destinations we choose are a form of soft diplomacy. While responsible safari tourism is crucial to animal protection and survival, and vastly improves the economy of local communities, steer clear of any companies that guarantee seeing animals up close. Ethical operators will support conservation, keep groups small, and limit the time following any animal to less than one hour.

33

GO TUBING IN VANG VIENG

Laos' lazy river has shaken off its partygoer past to become a relaxing traveller haven

One of the highlights of any trip to a waterpark is the lazy river – an oasis of relaxation among the thrills and spills of the high-octane rides. The same can now be said for tubing through the gorgeous scenery of Vang Vieng in north Laos.

Over the years, riding a rubber ring down the Nam Song River became a rite of passage for young travellers discovering the joys of Southeast Asia. However, as its popularity grew, so too did the amount of questionable activities. The area became a haven of drink, drugs, swings, zipwires and the devastatingly aptly-named Death Slide. This heady mixture resulted in dozens of deaths, forcing the government to ban

tubing in the river until Vang Vieng cleaned up its act.

Today the scene is very different. A tuk-tuk takes you to the launch site where you can set off on your journey, meandering through peaceful Laotian countryside. Bamboo bridges span the river, which is flanked by lush green vegetation, overlooked by picturesque mountains. Although its peak hedonistic days are in the past, it isn't exactly a monastery. Those who get on the river in the morning can enjoy a genteel journey, while those who want more of a party atmosphere can visit the small number of riverside bars from mid-afternoon. If you're early and quick

you could get both in as the rental office opens at 8am, closes at 8pm and your journey can take between three to five hours. As with a lot of experiences in Southeast Asia, it's very cheap for Westerners. The tube and tuk-tuk costs around £3 (\$3.60), while dry-bag rental and drinks will only add a few more pounds/dollars to your costs.

Whether you're searching for some zen or a cool place to enjoy some beers, tubing down the Nam Song River is a worthy chill-out session with all the amazing scenery you could wish for. So if you're after a magical way to enjoy one of Southeast Asia's lesser-visited countries, this lazy river is certainly back on the to-do list.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

For an extra fee, the tuk-tuk driver will set off before the vehicle is full, giving you a better chance for a private adventure.

Location:

Vang Vieng, Laos

Time zone:

UTC +7



Best time to visit:

The monsoons come between May and November, increasing water flow and speeding up your journey. For a slower experience, December to May is the dry season.

It's a rocky start to your tubing journey – how rocky the end is depends on how much you drink!



The adventure begins with a drive up the river on one of Vang Vieng's tuk-tuks

34

RIDE THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Travel through Europe aboard one of the world's most famous and luxurious sleeper trains

Known today as the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, this historic train service is known for its unique combination of vintage charm and 21st-century luxury, and has appeared in countless novels and films.

This long-distance sleeper train travels through Europe, so you can alight and disembark in the European cities of your choice. Options range from destinations such as London, Amsterdam and Paris, with the full range of stops available online. Travel in style and indulge in decadent

food and delicious cocktails, and listen to the onboard pianist while enjoying picturesque views and top-quality service. Dining is available either in your cabin or in the fabulous 1920s dining car, where you have a wide range of delicious options regardless of the time of day. There's something for everyone aboard the Orient Express, whether you're after a spot of high tea or a glass of champagne in the iconic bar car '3674'.

The ticket price depends on the duration of your journey, your cabin preference and any

refreshments that you purchase during the trip. For reference, the cosy 'Historic Cabins' begin at £2,920 (\$3,364) for one night, while the opulent 'Grand Suites' begin at £7,350 (\$8,468) per night, and prices increase from there. Your ticket will usually include breakfast, lunch and dinner for each day of your journey.

Space is limited on this antique train so pack light but don't forget your glad rags – black tie is expected in the evenings and there's no such thing as overdressed aboard the Orient Express.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure you pack your finery because smart clothing is expected throughout the journey, and jeans are not permitted at any time.

Location:

Europe

Time zone:

Will vary depending on the desired destination.

Best time to visit:

The train service runs throughout the year, so book your tickets for whatever season suits you best.



Revel in first-class service as you soak in the beautiful decoration



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Wear biodegradable sunscreen to help preserve cenotes' fragile ecosystem, which is home to a number of rare creatures.

Location:

Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico

Time zone:

UTC -5

Best time to visit:

Year round.



Some cenotes are largely underground with distinctive limestone formations; others are open air, hemmed in by dense tropical jungle plants

35

SWIM IN A CENOTE

Chill out in tropical Mexico by taking a dip in some of its hundreds of flooded sinkholes

With its postcard-perfect beaches, replete with powdery white sand, lush foliage and the turquoise waters and reefs of the Caribbean Sea, Mexico isn't short of Instagram-worthy locations to cool off. But arguably some of its most memorable swimming spots are not on the coast but nestled among the vast swathes of jungle that dominate the interior of the Yucatán Peninsula.

Cenotes are water-filled caves in the limestone landscape that have collapsed in on themselves – some more so than others. To the ancient Mayans, they were vital sources of fresh water and considered sacred gateways to the underworld. To this day, it's not hard to see why they inspired such awe.

One of the best things about cenotes is their sheer variety: there's one for every type of

traveller. Whether you're visiting with a young family, seeking a romantic getaway, or a solo explorer looking for some one-on-one time with nature, there's a cenote for you.

Your adventure threshold will dictate which cenotes are most suitable, so be sure to do some homework before you go. Certain pools can be accessed from ground level (such as Cristalino and Sambulá); others can only be reached via steps or a ladder, or even holding onto jungle vines Tarzan-style. Cliff diving might be an option too, but make absolutely sure of the depth before you leap. One of the more developed sites – Cenote Verde Lucero just south of Cancún – even has ziplines, enabling you to fly across the bright-green water.

Some people are content to just sit at the side and dip their feet in; others like to gently

float around on the surface, but it's a travesty to miss out on the geological and wildlife wonders lying below. With such clear water, it couldn't be simpler to enjoy cenotes' subaquatic sights, whether freediving, snorkelling, or for those who want to venture further into this hidden world, on a guided scuba dive.

A few rules apply in all cases, though. Always take a few hundred pesos for the entry fee, as card machines are scarce. Facilities vary, so consider putting on swim gear before you go, and be sure to have drink and snack supplies.

Those with a car will be able to access more off-the-beaten-track options (the more inland, generally the quieter they will be) – and if you really want to boost your odds of having a cenote all to yourself, set your alarm to get there bright and early.

36

RIDE THE BEST ROLLERCOASTERS

Thrillseekers don't need to look any further than these three coasters for the rides of their lives...

Fury 325, **USA**

We could offer up the steepest coaster, the longest coaster or even the coaster with the most inversions, loops or airtime as an option here, but instead why not go simply for the very best? The Fury 325 is a giga coaster and the biggest of its type at 99 metres (325 feet), and is also incredibly fast, with a traditional chain lift at 143kmph (95mph). But what's important is that this ride opened in 2015, became the fourth best steel coaster in the world before claiming the top spot five years running ever since. If you only ride one coaster ever again, let it be this one.



FUN, AT WHAT COST?

Most of the experiences in this book are fairly low-impact environmentally speaking, but it's important to acknowledge the ecological cost that comes from a rollercoaster. They're sprawling constructions that typically require the removal of a lot of natural space to build, and obviously guzzle up energy to keep them running. No one would begrudge you a day out at a theme park, but your carbon footprint will rise significantly for it.



Formula Rossa, **UAE**

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi is home to the fastest rollercoaster in the world, a launched coaster that propels its riders with hydraulic launchers up to 240kmph (149.1mph) in just 4.9 seconds. If that feat wasn't enough, it uses that insane speed to then fly over hills and turns that were inspired by the legendary Monza Circuit racetrack in Italy. It makes sense that Ferrari World would be home to the fastest coaster on the planet, but with plenty of other racing-themed experiences available, it's the sort of place that speed freaks and adrenaline junkies will be looking for.

Kingda Ka, **USA**

The Six Flags theme parks are well known globally for some of the most unnerving coasters in the world, so it's no surprise that those looking for excitement seek them out. Kingda Ka might have lost its title as the 'fastest rollercoaster in the world' to the Formula Rossa, but it's still proudly the tallest rollercoaster in the world at 139 metres (456 feet) – with the tallest drop of any coaster to boot. That's quite impressive considering it was built in 2005 and has yet to be beaten, making this an iconic must-ride coaster for any theme park fan.



It's important to wear the correct clothing – you'll be provided with the essentials

GO WITH A GUIDE

The ice caves are dangerous so you should always sign up to a tour with an expert guide. As well as keeping you safe, they will also share a lot of knowledge about the caves, explaining how they were formed and pointing out interesting structures.

37 EXPLORE ICELAND'S ICE CAVES

Discover an incredible frozen world with a tour of some of Iceland's most stunning ice caves



Crystal Ice Cave

Located within Vatnajökull National Park, the Crystal Ice Cave has naturally formed deep under Europe's largest glacier. It exudes a breathtaking blue colour thanks to the scattering of light, creating a translucent-looking ceiling dripping with icicles and sculptures that pretty much demand you whip out your camera. Visitors to the caves must go as part of a tour group, and the overall experience can take up to half a day with around 30 minutes inside. You're given a safety helmet and crampons, and you're allowed to reach out and touch the ice. It's always a good idea to book early, too.

Katla Ice Cave

These caves are beneath the Kötluþökkull Glacier, which is close to the Icelandic capital, Reykjavík. Open all year round and formed by the Katla volcano, they're not only the most visited of all of the Iceland ice caves but the only ones that allow you to see black erupted ash some 800 years old. Despite the black covering, the caves also sparkle with white, blue and violet colouring from the sunlight, making for a stunning view. You may also recognise some of the views since the Katla Ice Cave doubled as the Dragon Ice Cave in the hit HBO series *Game of Thrones*.



Langjökull Ice Cave

Although most of the ice caves have formed naturally, Langjökull Ice Cave is entirely man-made, created in Iceland's second-largest glacier. But that doesn't make it any less special since it's the longest tunnel of its kind in the world! It allows visitors to see an ice cave all year round and gives them the opportunity to explore the glacier and to see how they're made from the inside. There's even an in-built church, while the east side of the glacier is also home to an enormous ice cave that was only discovered in 2021. Visitors are being allowed into this as well.

38

WALK WITH GIANTS IN THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

Follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin to spot a rare giant tortoise in the wild

Want to meet a modern dinosaur bouncing back from the brink of extinction? The Galápagos giant tortoise can grow up to 1.5 metres (five feet), weigh more than 227 kilograms (500 pounds), and live for more than 100 years (the oldest Galápagos tortoise lived until 175). Not many people get to see them in person, but you could.

If you're looking for a close encounter with some of the world's most unique species in pristine habitats, a trip to the Galápagos Islands is a must. After all, 80% of the archipelago's land animals are endemic – found only on the Islands. Of these, the Galápagos tortoise is probably the most famous.

These giant reptiles not only give the Islands their name (galápagos is old Spanish for tortoise), but they were put under the spotlight in 2012

after Lonesome George, the last Pinta Island tortoise, died, making the subspecies extinct. When explorers first arrived to the Galápagos, there were more than 250,000 tortoises, but today there are only around 15,000, and most of the ten species are either endangered or critically endangered. Fortunately, thanks to the work of conservationists, there is hope for the future of the world's largest tortoises and longest-living reptiles – but you'll still want to see them while you have the chance.

Visitors often head to the Charles Darwin Research Station in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island to see its tortoise residents and learn about the conservation work being carried out. Captive tortoises can also be seen at breeding centres on Isabela Island (where the largest diversity of five subspecies live) and San

Cristóbal Island. However, the real adventure is spotting one in the wild. Santa Cruz Island has a number of highland farms where tortoises roam free and where they go to mate from June to December. One of the easiest places to see them in their natural habitat is the El Chato Tortoise Reserve, a 20-minute car journey from Puerto Ayora and a short hike.

While you may choose to see the giant tortoise, the reserve provides many unforgettable experiences including snorkelling with Galápagos penguins, turtles and sea lions, and seeing the only marine lizard on Earth – the marine iguana – and a whole host of incredible birds including the blue-footed booby, frigatebird and waved albatross. Just like naturalist Charles Darwin, whose theory of natural selection was inspired by the archipelago, you'll be blown away.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Most of the visitor sites can only be accessed by cruise ships and on specific itineraries, so if you want to see giant tortoises, make sure you do your research ahead of time.

Location:

Isla Santa Cruz, the Galápagos Islands

Time zone:

UTC -6

Best time to visit:

December to June

(wet season = tortoise hatchings).



“Most of the ten species are either endangered or critically endangered”



You'll want comfortable clothes and good hiking shoes for your trip to see these gentle giants



The Fairmont Hotel hairpin is one of the few overtaking opportunities for racing drivers

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Check the map – roads are so close together that sat navs may struggle to get a good GPS fix.

Location:

Monte Carlo, Monaco

Time zone:

UTC+1



Best time to visit:

Mid-May when the track is being set up ahead of the Grand Prix.

39 DRIVE A FORMULA 1 RACE TRACK

Pretend to be Lewis Hamilton on the streets of Monaco

Once a year, the biggest names in motorsport descend on a small city-state for a street fight. The Monaco Grand Prix has taken place on the roads of Monte Carlo since 1929, while Formula 1 cars have battled it out for the FIA World Championship on its narrow streets since its debut season in 1950. However, for the other 51 weekends of the year, the tight corners and fast straights rejoin the busy street map of Monte Carlo and anybody can drive them.

It's a unique challenge of urban navigation. Formula 1 drivers take around 75 seconds to rocket around the 3.3-kilometre (two-mile) track, the shortest they race on. However, don't expect

to match Hamilton or Leclerc on your journey. Monte Carlo may be small, but it's still Monaco's principal town and traffic can be heavy.

F1 fans will recognise many iconic locations. The Grand Hotel hairpin really is as tight as it looks on screen and you'll need to drop down the gears to get round it. The Red Bulls and Ferraris slow to a relative snail's pace too – a still-neck-bracing 50 kilometres (30 miles) per hour – but soon accelerate away to hit 280 kilometres (174 miles) per hour in the famous tunnel under the Fairmont Hotel. In a road car, the tunnel is surprisingly long before it opens out into the famous harbour. F1 drivers must

cope with chicanes here – Paul Hawkins and Alberto Ascari are the only drivers to have failed and ended up in the water – but normal road users must navigate junctions, car parks and pedestrianised zones. This is one part of the circuit where it's worth ditching the car and checking out the superyachts on foot. The lap ends on Boulevard Albert 1er where the grid slots and start-finish line are permanently painted on the asphalt.

You may not set any lap records, but wannabe Schumachers and Sennas can still boast that they have driven the same track as them – even if it is in a Smart car.

40

FLY IN A HOT AIR BALLOON

Enjoy stunning views during a sunrise hot air balloon flight across Cappadocia in Turkey

Hot air ballooning is a must during any visit to Turkey, and the place to do it is Cappadocia. Found towards the centre of the country, domestic flights typically run daily from Istanbul Airport. The hot air balloons themselves are flown throughout the year, meaning that you can choose whether to experience the panoramic views in the summer sunshine or through a blanket of snow.

Prepare yourself for an early morning; the first 100 balloons are launched before sunrise

with another 50 flying half an hour later. It is worth the early start, though – the balloons can reach a height of up to 3,000 metres (9,843 feet), providing guests with stunning views of the surrounding landscape. The direction of the flight is at the mercy of the wind, and a 'chaser' car will follow the balloon to collect you after landing.

You needn't be worried about safety, as the pilots are thoroughly trained and the balloons themselves are subject to regular safety inspections and maintenance, just like an

aeroplane. There's always the chance that flights may be cancelled during episodes of extreme weather, such as rain or strong wind, so while you can rest assured that you'll never fly in weather that is unsafe, it is possible that you might receive a last-minute cancellation.

The cost of a hot air balloon ride in Cappadocia will range between £120 (\$141) and £210 (\$250) per person. Children must be over the age of seven and it is recommended that you check the exact age required by the operator when booking.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure that you book well in advance as the number of flights per day is capped by law.

Location:

Cappadocia, Turkey

Time zone:

UTC +3

Best time to visit:

The spring or autumn months to avoid extremes in temperature.



Don't forget your camera – you will want to capture the sight of 100 hot air balloons flying together at sunrise

Around 900 competitors start each stage, although the crowds soon thin out



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure you save your legs for the race itself, and explore Morocco after you finish.

Location:

*Sahara Desert,
Morocco*

Time zone:

UTC+1

Best time to visit:

The race takes place every April.



41

RUN THE MARATHON DES SABLES

Shuffle across the Sahara in Morocco's famous ultramarathon

Some epic adventures require you to simply pay your money and turn up. Some require a little more preparation. Some require years of training and dedication. The Marathon des Sables is one such challenge.

The 900 or so competitors who tackle the world's most famous endurance race cover approximately 251 kilometres (156 miles) over the course of six days. The route varies from year to year and the stages are not uniform in length – the fourth day has the longest slog and few competitors complete it before dusk (thankfully a rest day follows). The greatest distance

competitors have been asked to travel in a single day was 91 kilometres (57 miles) in 2009. That's more than two back-to-back London Marathons – in hot desert temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit), on energy-sapping sand and uneven, rocky trails. Kudos to anybody who finishes.

However, rest assured the Marathon des Sables is achievable. The cut-off times are generous and allow plenty of time for walking. Some stages are over by lunchtime, enabling competitors to rest, relax and recuperate. There's also a lot of camaraderie – runners are doing it for the

challenge, not as a competition, and everyone is expected to bed down in communal tents.

If such self-flagellation sounds like fun and you are accustomed to endurance running, then don't be scared to enter – the Marathon des Sables is well organised and you'll receive plenty of support both before and during the race. If it all sounds a little too much – and let's face it, for most of us it probably is – then the race organisers have launched a new, shorter Half Marathon des Sables series. They run at various locations around the world, from Fuerteventura to Peru, although all remain desert races.

42

CAMP IN THE OUTBACK

Absorb Australia's natural beauty among its mesmerising scenery and iconic animals

There is nowhere quite like the Australian outback, and nowhere better to truly connect with the country. When camping in these vast lands, you will be greeted each day with an epic sunrise to match the glowing red earth. And, after the sun sets, perhaps the most vivid view of the night sky you have laid eyes upon will be revealed, thanks to the untouched and unpolluted expanse of the outback.

Far from the cities, many animals have claimed the land as their home. While camping in Australia's most remote regions, keep an eye out for wild kangaroos and wallabies, snakes, unique lizards and dingoes.

It's important to know which animals to be wary of when camping in the outback. If you

are camping independently, be sure to set up your base at least 100 metres (330 feet) away from water, to stay a safe distance from crocodiles. And, to avoid the bites of spiders and other insects – or an unwanted encounter from any animal – never keep your tent or vehicle open. If you are not with an experienced group, thoroughly plan and research your camping area before travelling.

The unfamiliarity of Australia's most unpopulated lands need not hold you back, as there are many camping group retreats available. These are some of the best ways to experience camping in the outback and are often led by people who have grown up there, and know crucial safety tips. You may even

learn of the natural healing properties of the resources around you, while uncovering secret waterfalls and canyons to explore. While camping independently can be free of cost, spending about £600 (\$700) for a five-day tour (with food and activities often included) is worth it if you want to pack the most into your trip and gain expert knowledge.

Whether you try sandboarding down the desolate sandy dunes, find safe and refreshing water holes to take a relaxing dip in, or learn of the rich Aboriginal history around the warming light of the campfire, a trip to the outback will provide you with a new respect for nature Down Under. The serenity of this adventure is something you will remember for a lifetime.

Australia's outback is one of the best places for skywatching

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Many outback areas are sacred to local Aboriginal people. Treat the land with respect and leave it as you found it. ✈️

Location:

Central regions,
Australia

Time zone:

UTC+8

Best time to visit:

March to November to avoid the hottest days of the year.





ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Wear washable footwear or old shoes that you're happy to throw away, as the red clay mud is a nightmare to get out. ✈️

Location:

South Maitland,
Nova Scotia,
Canada



Time zone:

UTC-4

Best time to visit:

May to October (weather dependent).

The Shubenacadie River draws the most tidal-bore chasers, with water reaching up to 12kmh (7.5mph) at peak surge

43

RIDE A TIDAL BORE

Hang on tight on a river rollercoaster and find out why there's nothing boring about tidal bores!

Tucked unassumingly between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in eastern Canada, the funnel-shaped Bay of Fundy might not look much on the map, but it's home to the world's most extreme tidal range. In some spots, the water line can vary by 16.8 metres (54 feet) between high and low tides.

An unexpected bonus of 100 billion tonnes of seawater crashing into the bay each day is an ocean-powered thrill ride that every adrenaline junkie should add to their bucket list. At a handful of rivers, the usual flow is temporarily reversed as the sea pushes back up to 40 kilometres (25 miles) inland.

One of the best of these 'tidal bores' plays out in Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie River, where you

can experience it first hand for £45 (\$50). The journey starts peacefully, gliding in an inflatable boat across muddy waters flowing languidly downstream. As you zoom past craggy cliffs and dense pine forest, look out for bald eagles perched in treetop nests.

Before the action begins, step onto a sandbar to take some 'before' pictures and prepare for what's to come. Don't linger, though, as the islands you're standing on are about to be engulfed. It starts as a distant rumble, then a few surface ripples. The well-tuned senses of your captain lets them know the perfect moment to rev the engines and head back upstream.

Except what was upstream has now turned on its head. You're riding the incoming surge up the

river and you better hold on tight as it's about to get rough! Ripples escalate into choppy rapids – leaving troughs up to three metres (ten feet) deep in their wake.

The shoreline becomes a blur; all sense of what is up and what is down becomes jangled; and walls of water splash over you from all directions. It's as if you've been thrown into a washing machine and put on the fastest spin cycle.

All too soon, the waves are dying down as the power of the bore begins to wane. But the fun isn't over just yet. Continue the adventure with some mudsliding down the slippery banks and into the river. It's a gloriously messy way to end a trip that will make a big kid out of even the most serious of grown-ups.

44

SPEND THE NIGHT IN
A HAUNTED HOTEL

If you like things that go bump in the night, check in to any of these hotels for a thrilling time



SLEEP WELL

If you're easily spooked, perhaps book a second night somewhere else so you'll know that you'll get a good night's sleep.

The Mermaid Inn,
ENGLAND

If you're looking for a spooky hotel, one consideration should be the Mermaid Inn, Rye, East Sussex. Located in a picturesque village (that's worth a visit anyway), the Mermaid Inn is thought to be one of the most haunted sites in England. A plethora of ghost sightings have been reported there, and figures are often seen walking through bedroom walls along with stories of rocking chairs moving on their own and rooms turning cold. Rates are upwards of £100 (\$118) a night.

Ballygally Castle,
NORTHERN IRELAND

Nestled into the stunning coastline of the Causeway Coastal Route is a 17th-century castle-turned-hotel. But its patrons aren't all living – there are at least three reported phantoms roaming the halls.

The most famous is Lady Isabella Shaw, the wife of a previous owner. After giving birth to a daughter when her husband desperately wanted a son, she was locked away. As she tried to escape to get back to her child, she fell to her death from the tower window. Today a bedroom, known as the Ghost Room, is dedicated to her in one of the turrets in the oldest part of the castle.

Parador de Jaén,
SPAIN

When staying overnight at the Parador de Jaén, it's best to make sure you're not booked into room 22. After dozens of reports of guests being woken in the middle of the night by knocking and a woman's cry, a team of paranormal psychiatrists investigated. Their conclusion? The room was haunted by a young woman who had died of heartbreak there a few centuries ago.

That's not the only ghost in this 18th-century Arab fortress, either. A prisoner by the name of Terrible Lagarto, or Terrible Lizard, is said to roam the halls and sometimes even momentarily possess distracted guests.

45

SWIM WITH DOLPHINS

A dolphin sighting is always a wondrous thing, but surely it's better to swim with them?



Oahu Island, HAWAII

The persistently warm and pleasant waters of Hawaii are as enticing to us as they are to dolphins, which is why these islands make for a great destination if spotting a dolphin in the wild is on your bucket list. You can find these marvellous mammals all year round, and almost any tour will get you up close and personal with a dolphin. The particular highlight is the spinner dolphins that can be seen in the area, whose acrobatic spins while diving out of the water give them their name. They're well known for their fun and friendliness, which makes them great swimming partners.

The Red Sea

Perhaps the world's number one destination for all things marine-life, at least for adventure tourists, anyway, there are plenty of countries connected by the Red Sea that will give you a high chance of swimming with dolphins. In fact, the region has the highest variety of dolphins of anywhere in the world, with as many as seven species of dolphin known to reside in these waters. Where you choose to go to access the Red Sea really comes down to other factors of your travel itinerary, but if dolphin sighting is a primary goal then it won't be hard to find a list of options.



MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

Unfortunately, the popular desire to swim with dolphins does mean that there are some rather salacious tour companies out there. Be sure to thoroughly check that the excursion to swim with wild dolphins is a genuine experience (ie not with captive dolphins in a pool) and that the tour is handled ethically and without impact.

Kaikōura, NEW ZEALAND

This is a hot spot for all sorts of watery wildlife, and is particularly noteworthy for its sperm whale sightings. However, dolphins are equally abundant here, with the regional dusky dolphins regularly appearing in pods of up to 1,000 – an incredible sight to glimpse, no doubt. There can be few experiences as breathtaking as swimming with whole families of dolphins, made all the more awe-inspiring thanks to the uniquely glorious landscape of New Zealand that will frame your trip. Tour guides are so confident you'll get to swim or dive with dolphins that they're even guaranteeing it as part of their offers.





ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Given the extreme heights involved, some travellers like to bring altitude sickness medication, as well as anti-diarrhoea pills; one of the more common side-effects of the condition.



Location:

Cuzco, Peru

Time zone:

UTC-5



Best time to visit:

April and May, after the end of the rainy season and before the crowds rush in.

UNESCO describes Machu Picchu as 'among the greatest artistic, architectural and land use achievements anywhere'

46

TREK TO MACHU PICCHU

Conquer the jungles of Peru to reach the lost city of Machu Picchu

High above the clouds, hidden for centuries, lie the ruins of Machu Picchu, a 15th-century sacred site built during the peak of the short-lived Inca Empire. Remarkably constructed on a precarious mountain ridge 2,430 metres (7,972 feet) above sea level, it remains one of the greatest marvels of human history; a rare location that inspires genuine awe, mystery and fascination.

Adding to the intrigue, modern explorers can follow in the footsteps of the Inca, painstakingly climbing overgrown mountains and terraced ruins before finally tumbling out over the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Born at the Sacred Valley, the storied four-day Inca Trail is walked by thousands each year and catapults hikers 39 kilometres (24 miles) over three high Andean passes. It snakes past snowy mountain peaks, crumbling ruins and gurgling rivers, through the deciduous alpine terrain of Cloud Forest and the almighty Dead Woman's Pass until the cliff-hugging pre-Columbian ruin comes into focus at Sun Gate.

Costing an average of £650 (\$770) per person, the Inca Trail is not for the faint-hearted – the route features some steep ascents and high levels of altitude. In addition, trekkers experience multiple seasons in a single day – starting the

day shivering, only to be sweltering by midday. Most like to pack several layers, to cater to the volatile temperament of the Andean foothills.

Abandoned after the Spanish conquest of Peru, Machu Picchu remained obscured behind the Peruvian jungle until they were re-discovered by 20th-century archaeologist Hiram Bingham. Today, they stand as a landmark to human ingenuity, a relic of the remarkable civilisation that once ruled the Andes with an iron fist – described by UNESCO as 'among the greatest artistic, architectural and land use achievements anywhere and the most significant tangible legacy of the Inca civilisation'.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Visitors taking the bullet train during Japanese holidays, such as Golden Week, are advised to book seats well in advance. ➔

Location:

Japan

Time zone:

UTC +9

Best time to visit:

Spring for cherry blossom season and mild weather.



47

RIDE THE BULLET TRAIN

Embark on a breakneck journey across Japan via the high-speed Shinkansen trains

Without a shadow of doubt, the most iconic way to traverse Japan's three main islands of Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido is on the lightning-paced bullet train, known as the Shinkansen. Linking several cities across the country, the bullet train throttles past mountainous, forest-drenched terrains, intersected by lowlands of pastoral perfection, and even tropical paradise. The most thrilling way to soak in Japan's dramatic landscapes, the trains are a true sight to behold.

While the country's scenery varies wildly from north to south, and east to west, the

Shinkansen's service is among the most consistent in the world. The trains in Japan are famously punctual, safe and comfortable. Visitors hoping to explore the farthest reaches of the country should purchase a JR Pass, which enables them to travel on most bullet trains, as many times as they like, within a set period. The passes cost £199 (\$230) for seven days, £312 (\$360) for 14 days or £390 (\$450) for 21 days.

First launched in October 1964, the Shinkansen network has expanded to 3,041 kilometres (1,890 miles) of track, with trains reaching speeds of up to 320 kilometres (200 miles) per hour.

While the multi-line network runs from Hakodate in the north, all the way to Kagoshima on the southernmost tip of Kyushu, the most popular line on the railway is Tokaido, which runs through Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka. The oldest of Shinkansen lines, Tokaido was named after the storied road that once connected the ancient capital of Kyoto with Tokyo. Originally running at 210 kilometres (130 miles) per hour, the trains have since sped up to 285 kilometres (178 miles) per hour, and feature three prominent models: Nozomi, Hikari and Kodoma.

Launched in 1964,
Japan's bullet trains
today reach speeds of up
to 320 kph (200 mph)



Most trains feature Green Class, which is similar to first-class train travel elsewhere, but some new trains have taken locomotive luxury to new heights with Gran Class. This offers extra leg room, plush reclining chairs, blankets, warm towels, slippers and eye masks.

Although it's the most exciting way to travel across the land of the rising sun, travellers should remember that trains usually feature both reserved and non-reserved seats, but green car seats should be booked in advance, and certain routes on the Tohoku/Hokkaido line require reservations to be made in advance.

48 CAMP ON A CLIFF

Drop off to sleep on the side of a Canadian cliff

Camping can be adventurous no matter where you do it, but if you want a location that's certain to send jaws dropping then consider pitching up on the side of a cliff. In this case, it doesn't mean putting up a tent on level ground far away from the edge, however. Cliff camping actually entails creating a portable ledge and sleeping on what's effectively a collapsible framed camp bed with land far below.

It sounds dangerous and it is – potentially anyway. There are companies around that offer to guide and assist you and you don't necessarily need to be an experienced climber. They'll ensure your portaledge is secured to the cliff and they'll always be on hand to help with any issues. Of course, the guides will also ensure you can get back up to the safety of the land when you're finished, too. All you need to take is a sleeping bag and some warm clothes.

So what can you expect? Well, the views will be amazing and you'll feel very much at one with

nature. Going to sleep and waking up to see your unique vantage point is certainly going to live with you forever and a day. If it rains, the guides will use flysheets that effectively create a tent on your ledge for protection. You will also be fed and given drinks.

It's pretty essential that you have a head for heights, of course, but being suspended over a cliff edge is safe when done properly and you are always going to be attached to a rope. There are fees involved but it's not as expensive as you might imagine given the experience. Expect to pay around £130 (\$200) per night per person on average. It'll be worth every penny!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Try not to sleep too early – the portaledges provide a great opportunity to gaze at the stars.

Location:

British Columbia, Canada

Time zone:

UTC -7

Best time to visit:

You may want to go during the summer so that you're not battered by rain.



Don't worry: it may look like a steep drop but each person is secured by a rope



49

CRUISE THE NILE

Traditional wooden sailing boats, or dahabiyas, offer an Earth-friendly way to explore the Nile

There is no doubt that the River Nile is a magnificent stretch of water, steeped in myth and legend. Slithering 6,650 kilometres (4,130 miles), it snakes through 11 countries and is fringed by breathtaking sights and historic monuments. Following in the footsteps of Egypt's 19th-century explorers, cruises aboard a traditional sailing boat, known as a dahabiya, offer a time-honoured way to explore the storied waterway, its tombs, mosques and temples, while also experiencing the natural ebb and flow of life on the river.

The river between Luxor and Aswan, in Egypt, is perhaps both the most remarkable and most accessible for travellers. Good quality dahabiya

cruises along this busy stretch take four or five days, with costs starting at £300 (\$350) per person, per night.

After breakfast, mornings start with an outing to a temple or site, accompanied by experienced Egyptologists who know how to make sense of the sights. Highlights include the ancient Karnak Temple, which unfolds in a forest of sandstone pillars and obelisks. The largest religious building ever built, it was a shrine to the Egyptian sun god, Amun-Re. Close by, two giant statues of the pharaoh, Ramses II, guard the entrance to Luxor Temple. Inside, its walls are adorned with perfectly preserved hieroglyphics and carvings of boats being carried down the Nile.

Lunches are usually taken aboard the dahabiya, as passengers watch life on the Nile unfold around them. Families gather on the riverbank to share steaming cups of cardamom tea, lone fishermen trawl the day's catch, and children wallow through the shallow waters in the shadow of crumbling monuments from lost civilisations. Once the midday heat passes, guests are usually treated to another excursion before returning to the boat for a multi-course dinner prepared using fresh ingredients purchased each day from farmers and fishermen along the river. As the sun begins to set, the anchor and sails are raised once more as the boat makes its way to its next magnificent location.

Traditional wooden sailing boats, or dahabiyas, offer a slower and gentler way to explore the Nile

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Be sure to pack a flash light and binoculars, for optimum viewing, and don't forget the bug spray!

Location:
Egypt

Time zone:
UTC +2

Best time to visit:
October and April to avoid the summer heat.

CURRENCY
£
EGYPTIAN POUND



Vintage cars lined up against colourful, old buildings is an image that comes to mind when you think of Havana

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure you research tours and prices. Tours from the Capitolio Nacional are half the price of ones leaving from the harbour. If you're organising a car and driver yourself, agree on the price before you start the trip.

Location:

Havana, Cuba

Time zone:

UTC-4

Best time to visit:

November to April (dry season).



50 EXPLORE HAVANA IN A CLASSIC CAR

Take a ride in style as you tour this colourful capital in the most iconic way

Cuban beats, rum cocktails and a line-up of vintage American cars against a backdrop of charming pastel colonial buildings. This is the image that comes to mind when you think of Havana. So what better way to get a taste of the Caribbean's biggest metropolis than jumping into the backseat of a Cadillac or Buick to discover this modern city's vibrant present and revolutionary past.

A classic car tour of Havana is a memorable experience. After all, how often do you take a nostalgic ride in a vintage American car? Step back in time to the 1940s and 50s as you relax in a Chevrolet Bel Air or Plymouth to see the sights.

With more than 60,000 cars, ranging from hard tops to convertibles, you'll be spoilt for choice.

Either join an escorted tour, which often includes a walk before the drive, create a tailor-made journey or arrange your own (there are plenty of cars with drivers in Old Havana – try Parque Central, near the Capitol Building, or by Plaza San Francisco). The latter means you can choose when you go and what car you get and is the cheapest option, but it also means having to negotiate with drivers in Spanish, many of whom are not guides.

While the cars are completely safe, because of the value and condition of these motors, you generally won't be able to drive them yourself – although if you're lucky, your driver may let you briefly take the wheel. However, even in the backseat this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Sit back and enjoy the wind in your hair, chat to your driver and watch the city whizz by.

Tours range from one to three hours (or longer if you go further afield to the beautiful landscape of the Viñales Valley or the beaches of Varadero), and can cost anything from £25 (\$30) on the street to £124 (\$150) depending on your itinerary. Highlights include the iconic Capitolio Nacional building, Revolution Square (which houses the monument dedicated to the father of Cuban Independence, José Martí, as well as murals of Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos) and, of course, the famous Malecon seaside walkway where the locals gather for mojitos and music in the evenings. Whichever route you choose, you're in for an unforgettable ride.

51

SNORKEL BETWEEN TWO CONTINENTS

Plunge into glacial meltwater that lies in continental no-man's-land in southern Iceland

The edge of the Arctic Circle isn't an obvious location for snorkelling – and, admittedly, Iceland's take on it is a little bit unusual...

First formed in 1789, the Silfra Fissure is a flooded chasm that lies in the petrified remains of a lava field between the Eurasian and North American continental plates. Every year, these plates pull a couple of centimetres (0.8 inches) farther apart – hence why Iceland is often in the news for its tectonic and volcanic activity.

There's no denying the water at Silfra – now situated at the heart of the Thingvellir National Park – is cold. Very cold. It originates from Langjökull, the country's second-largest glacier, and hovers at a bracing two degrees Celsius (35.6 degrees Fahrenheit) year round.

What would possess anyone to dip even their toe into this ice bath – especially in a place famed for its hot-water attractions?

Rest assured, you don't need to worry about the chill. You're fitted out in three layers, with watertight seals on the neck and wrists. So the only part you have to temporarily sacrifice to the adventure gods is your face outside the goggles.

The moment you enter the water and glimpse what lies below, numb cheeks become a distant memory. The serene rocky diorama belies a turbulent past – a freeze-frame of once molten magma now solidified into a jagged beautiful mess. Combine the crazy rock formations with patches of sun-dappled white sand and various types of algae in vibrant shades of green and yellow, and you have a one-off showstopper.

What makes this experience all the more unique is the water clarity. H₂O doesn't come clearer than this – it's possible to see for more than 100 metres (328 feet). It's as if you're swimming through chilled gin; the beautiful views provide the tonic.

The unique snorkel trip ends in the Silfra Lagoon, a shallower bowl at the end of the fissure where light is more plentiful. Here aquatic plants abound, with even a few small fish darting in and out of view.

Back on land, as your face thaws with the aid of a hot chocolate and biscuits provided by the guides, you'll find yourself musing how fickle time is. The 40 minutes that earlier seemed like a lifetime to spend in icy water now suddenly seems far too fleeting.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

To keep toasty, don't forget to take a thin, close-fitting underlayer to go under the two outer layers that are supplied. 

Location:

Thingvellir National Park,
Iceland

Time zone:

UTC



Best time to visit:

Water temperature is fairly constant throughout the year, but summer (May to September) is warmer out of the water.

The water is so clear at Silfra that it's possible to see more than 100m (328ft)

The pigs are friendly and will let you pet them, but they're still wild animals: be respectful!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

If you charter your own boat, be sure to take carrots, lettuce, watermelon or apples if you want to feed the pigs. Make sure you only feed them pitted fruit and veg in the water so they don't choke or ingest sand.

Location:

*Big Major Cay, Exuma,
The Bahamas*

Time zone:

UTC-4



Best time to visit:

November to mid-December for good weather and fewer visitors.



52

SWIM WITH PIGS IN THE BAHAMAS

There is so much more to the Exuma Islands than crystal-clear waters and white, sandy beaches

Sunseekers' holidays are often spoiled by people hogging the best part of the beach, but in this tropical paradise, the hogs are the best part of the beach. Just 129 kilometres (80 miles) southeast of Nassau (the capital of the Bahamas), you'll find a group of more than 365 islands known as the Exumas. Home to luxury resorts, unspoiled beaches and tropical reefs, one of the biggest draws of this stunning destination is that it's the only place in the world where you can go swimming with pigs.

It's not known exactly how they got there, but the pigs first arrived on Pig Beach, as it's known, in the 1990s. Whether they survived a shipwreck, were deserted by sailors or raised by farmers searching for a solution to the Y2K computer crash, their story remains a mystery. However,

the pigs soon became famous as visitors took to social media to share their experiences with this unexpected beach inhabitant.

Today there are around 25 pigs and piglets living on Big Major Cay and you can take day trips to the uninhabited island to pet or even swim with these adorable residents. While they may not be native to the Bahamas and they're still wild animals, they're super friendly, giving respectful visitors the chance to get up close and personal.

To reach Pig Beach you'll have to travel by plane and then boat. Fly from Nassau to Staniel Cay (for about £415/\$500), which is ten minutes away by boat, or take a three-hour speedboat direct from Nassau (for around £330/\$400). There are lots of options, but flight operators are limited so do your homework.

Many of the all-inclusive resorts organise half-day (around £140/\$168) or day trips (around £290/\$350). Most tours leave at 8-9am and return at sunset. Or you can charter a boat (private tours can cost from £830/\$1,000) so that you can plan when you want to visit and avoid the crowds – just make sure you specify Major Cay as there are other pig beaches cropping up. The beach is emptier early in the morning and the pigs tend to be in the water, whereas during the afternoon they are often full from lunch and lazing on the beach.

The Exumas are a wildlife haven. Snorkel the James Bond Thunderball Grotto and swim with nurse sharks. But the pigs at Pig Beach are unforgettable. You may never see pigs fly, but where else will you get to swim with them?

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Advance route planning is a must – some destinations have vigorous visa requirements and restrictions ✈️

Location:

Prague, Czech Republic
to Ulan-Ude, Russia ⚠️

Time zone:

Various

CURRENCY

VARIOUS CURRENCIES

Best time to visit:

The rally takes place from
July to September.



A Mongol Rally car on the bumpy road along the Wakhan Corridor, Tajikistan



Competitors are encouraged to decorate their cars and seek out novelty vehicles

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Due to the current conflict in Russia and the Ukraine, the 2023 rally was cancelled. The 2024 event is open; however the route may be different. Visit theadventurists.com for updates. ✈️

53

DRIVE THE MONGOL RALLY

Travel 16,000km (10,000) in a small, unsuitable car in the world's most peculiar endurance race

Rallying is one of motorsport's simplest formats: drive from one point to another to test speed, endurance and navigation. The Dakar Rally relies on expensive machinery, often supplied by works teams. The Mille Miglia is the preserve of professional racers and those who have the funds to buy their way in. But the Mongol Rally – now that's different.

The quirky Mongol Rally sees competitors leave various starting points in Western Europe to reach the official launch in the Czech Republic capital of Prague in July. From there, they make their way to the finish line at Ulan-Ude, Russia,

by September. There's no set route, though competitors usually travel via the steppes of Mongolia, hence the name. Instead of supplying a long list of waypoints, the rally organisers encourage a sense of wanderlust. However, it does mean there is no backup. Anybody who breaks down – a distinct possibility when covering at least 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) – must fix their vehicle themselves or abandon the quest.

Reliability is a prized asset for Mongol Rally vehicles, but the organisers have added an extra challenge by insisting that cars must have a

maximum engine size of 1.2 litres. Motorbikes are limited to 125cc. One of the race's few rules is that no cars can be left behind at the finish; they must be driven back home or put on a freight train to Europe.

It's all about the journey, not the end destination. No need to rush. There are three finish-line parties spread over three weeks to accommodate all finishers. A basic knowledge of car mechanics is a useful skill, but what competitors really need is the correct mindset. The Mongol Rally is a race for those who aren't bothered about actually racing.

BE PREPARED

Climbing active volcanoes can be risky business. Always check with your provider before heading to a volcano in case the trail is closed, and make sure you're wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. The higher up you go, the colder it can get so always pack a jumper.

54

CLIMB AN ACTIVE VOLCANO

Climbing mountains not doing it for you? Head up the world's greatest marvels instead



Mount Etna, ITALY

If you're looking for a break from eating pasta on the beautiful island of Sicily, why not head to Mount Etna? Europe's tallest and most active volcano offers stunning views across the Mediterranean from the summit at 3,350 metres (10,990 feet). A cable car takes adventurers halfway up, and from there you can hike to the top to see the steam billowing from the crater.

Before you head out, it's worth checking to see if the trek is open. Volcanic activities will close the trail if it's deemed too dangerous.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, HAWAII

Hawaii is known for its volcanic activity, and its national park is certainly no exception. The longest trail is 17.7 kilometres (11 miles) around the rim of Kilauea, which could include a run-in with natural steam and volcanic gasses from the crater. For those looking for something a little shorter, the trail to Kilauea Iki is just 6.5 kilometres (four miles). You'll find something for everyone in Hawaii, with a total of 241.5 kilometres (150 miles) of trails on which to explore hot magma and natural rainforest.



Cotopaxi, ECUADOR

Ecuador's famed Avenue of the Volcanoes in the Andes Mountains is home to Cotopaxi, a 5,897-metre (19,347-foot) behemoth. This one is usually reserved for the most experienced adventurers, as it's a difficult two-day climb to reach the summit. Once you've reached your goal, there's an opportunity to mountain bike down part of it.

If you still want to climb Cotopaxi but you're not up for the two days it takes, many companies run multi-day tours that include trekking up part of the volcano.

55

RIDE DOWN VIETNAM'S HO CHI MINH TRAIL

There are few sights as iconic as a motorbike gunning it down this famed route...

It's easy to judge two-wheeling it around Vietnam as cliché, but the fact is that's just a very normal way of getting around in the country. Motorbikes are so prevalent that the Vietnamese have made it as much an identity of the nation as a means of transport. It's hardly surprising, then, that this is an experience that calls to many travellers, and the Ho Chi Minh Trail – with its historical Vietnam War significance – in particular is a memorable option for more seasoned riders.

This route was created during the war and was used to transport supplies across the country. These days it connects north and south Vietnam,

but there remains many visible impacts of the war and the various military structures and outposts used during that time. In truth, the real trails likely remain secrets, hidden away in Laos and almost entirely dirt tracks. The one that tourists ride, well, that's a little more friendly thanks to the tarmac and the smoother ride. It incorporates the natural beauty of Vietnam, too, past rice fields, around mountains and through forests. It's truly eclectic.

The Ho Chi Minh Trail is not officially determined anywhere, but typically it covers the distance between Hoi An and the country's capital, Hanoi, though some routes can be prolonged to cover

the breadth of the coastline of the country to get you to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, as well. You'll have no trouble finding information for the route online if you want to go it solo, but because of the route's history (and the madness of Vietnamese traffic) it might be worthwhile to consider searching for a tour guide. Not only will a good tour get you on the right roads without having to stress about any of that yourself, but you're also more likely to get to see and understand more about Vietnam, the Vietnamese and their culture, and of course learn of the impacts of the Vietnam War.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

It probably goes without saying that you will need to be fairly experienced riding a motorbike if you want to make it through Vietnam and Hanoi in particular.

Location:

Vietnam

Time zone:

UTC+7

Best time to visit:

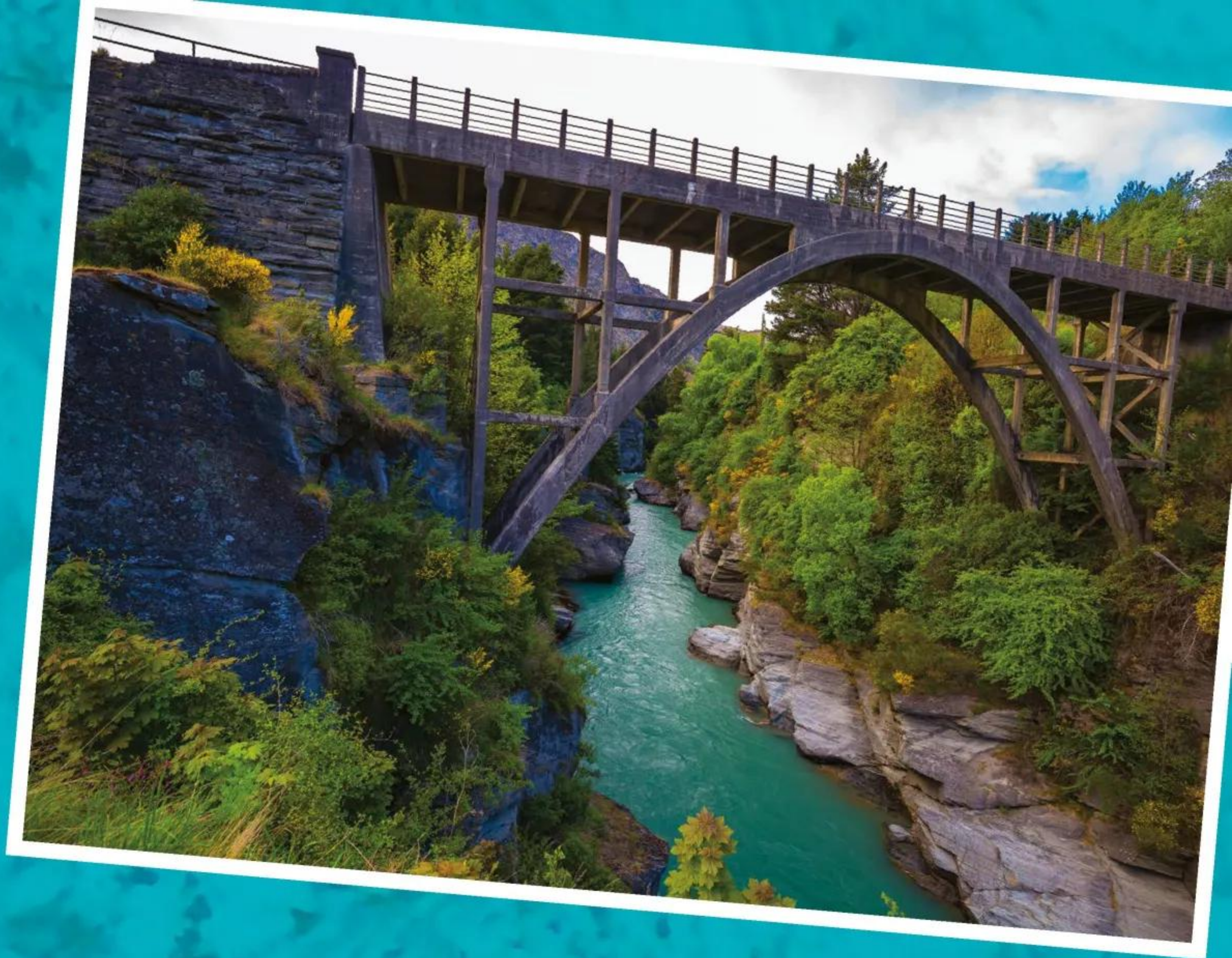
February to April, for the drier weather but cooler temperatures.



The history of the Ho Chi Minh Trail is only enhanced by its glorious natural beauty



Bungee jumping is the ultimate adrenaline rush for thrill-seekers



“The feeling bungee jumping gives you is incomparable; it’s pure adrenaline”

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Don't hesitate once you're on the platform. Just go for it or you'll freak yourself out.

Location:

Queenstown, South Island, New Zealand

Time zone:

UTC+12



Best time to visit:

Any time, but wrap up warm in winter.

56 BUNGEE JUMP

Take a leap of faith above the Kawarau River in New Zealand

Where can you find Fear and Fun with capital Fs in equal measure? Pinging up and down while suspended 43 metres (141 feet) high above the glacier-fed Kawarau River near Queenstown, New Zealand. You'll likely be oblivious to the stunning, dramatic scenery as you inch out onto the platform – knees knocking, legs quivering, palms sweating, heart pounding – before you leap off into the gorge and freefall until your head makes contact with the chilly water below. If you'd rather not get soggy, you can opt for the 'dry jump'.

You can also opt for a tandem bungee, as long as your combined weight doesn't exceed 235 kilograms (518 pounds). If jumping solo, you must weigh between 35 and 235 kilograms (77 and 518 pounds). The minimum age is ten, and children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

The world's first commercial bungee, the Kawarau Bridge Bungy, has hosted more than a million adrenaline junkies seeking the ultimate heart-in-mouth rush. Run by AJ Hackett Bungy, there are two more bungee

adventures in the vicinity: Ledge Bungy (where the harness is attached to your waist rather than your legs) and Nevis Bungy (the highest bungy in New Zealand, offering eight-and-a-half seconds of freefall). The Kawarau Bridge Bungy costs around £100 (\$120) and it's advisable to book in advance.

The feeling bungee jumping gives you is incomparable. You'll test your limits and, as you take the plunge, there's a chance that another 'F' word might just escape your mouth.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure you take your own toilet paper, and wrap it in a plastic bag to keep it dry.

Location:
Tanzania

Time zone:
UTC+3

Best time to visit:
March or October, to avoid crowds and bad weather.



Kilimanjaro's summit, Uhuru Peak, is the highest point in Africa, and one of its most spectacular sights



57

SUMMIT MOUNT KILIMANJARO

A lack of climbing experience can't stop you standing on the Roof of Africa

Exploding from the flat Tanzanian plains, Mount Kilimanjaro's snow-capped summit is instantly recognisable. Standing 5,895 metres (19,340 feet) tall, it's Africa's tallest peak and the highest free-standing mountain on Earth. Despite the impressive credentials, no technical skill is required to reach its summit – giving uninitiated climbers the rare opportunity to conquer one of the world's Seven Summits.

On average, it takes about a week to summit Kilimanjaro, and park regulations prevent anyone from climbing without a certified guide – which can cost anywhere from £1,600 (\$2,000) to £4,900 (\$6,000). Whichever operator climbers

choose, there are seven routes to take them to the Roof of Africa – Marangu, Machame, Rongai, Lemosho, Shira, Umbwe and Mweka. The 35-kilometre (22-mile) Marangu trail is the oldest and most direct route. It snakes through grasslands and cacti fields before traversing alpine meadows. While it's the only route with hut accommodation – the others require tents – it has a low success rate due to the limited acclimatisation period and steep incline.

Unlike Marangu, the 40-kilometre (25-mile) Machame route encourages slow and steady acclimatisation – the trail rises and falls through forests, moorland and desert before reaching

the snow-crowned Kibo. Meanwhile, Rongai slithers across the north-eastern side of the mountain and attracts fewer climbers than the other routes, thanks to its secluded starting point at the Kenyan border. The trail offers up solitude, wildlife and a rare glimpse into traditional Chagga village life.

Whichever route climbers take, the Moon-like Uhuru Peak, Kilimanjaro's highest point, is the goal. After a midnight wake-up call and seven-hour slog, summiting at sunrise rewards hikers with unobscured views of sprawling icy blue glaciers against a still-pink horizon and cotton-candy clouds.

58

ROAD TRIP THROUGH AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

See the best the country has to offer in the only way that matters

What is it about the great American road trip? More than any other country, it is synonymous with tourists heading out to the United States with one goal in mind: take an epic journey from one side to the other. Most try to aim for the iconic Route 66 as the way to go, and certainly that'll get the job done. But it's no surprise given the sheer size of the USA that its landscapes are as eclectic and varied as the people that inhabit them. And so to truly see the USA, you need to take a journey that will wind its way across the entirety of its vast landmass.

That's why a road trip to pass through each of the country's national parks is such an enticing endeavour. For one thing, it'll take at least two

months to complete – especially if you're hoping to actually stay and explore the most memorable nature reserves in the country. However, that's what makes it so exciting: it's something you really need to plan, to think about what makes sense to visit, and then dedicate a significant part of your year to completing it. It'll be memorable, that's for sure, but it's really only a once-in-a-lifetime trip because of just how much time you'll put into it.

In terms of 'how', well that of course does come down to personal preference. Since there are 20 states in the United States that do not have national parks, you might want to consider off-route locations that you're desperate to see.

There are also those harder-to-reach places to consider, such as Hawaii, Alaska or other US territories like the Virgin Islands, which make it a particularly complicated plan if your aim is to tick off each of the 63 US national parks.

You'll need to consider transportation in your plan, too: renting a car from a national car-rental company is probably the easiest and most comfortable method of travel, but motorbikes, pedal bikes, and even trains and buses are all viable options. As long as you ensure you put aside enough time to maximise the adventure, you're not likely to come away feeling that you missed something from such a massive undertaking.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

If you absolutely need to pre-book an outbound flight for after the road trip, consider the date carefully. It's worth over-estimating how long the road trip will take, to allow for both mishaps and intentional detours.

Location:

USA

Time zone:

Various

Best time to visit:

Summer, for the more pleasant driving weather.



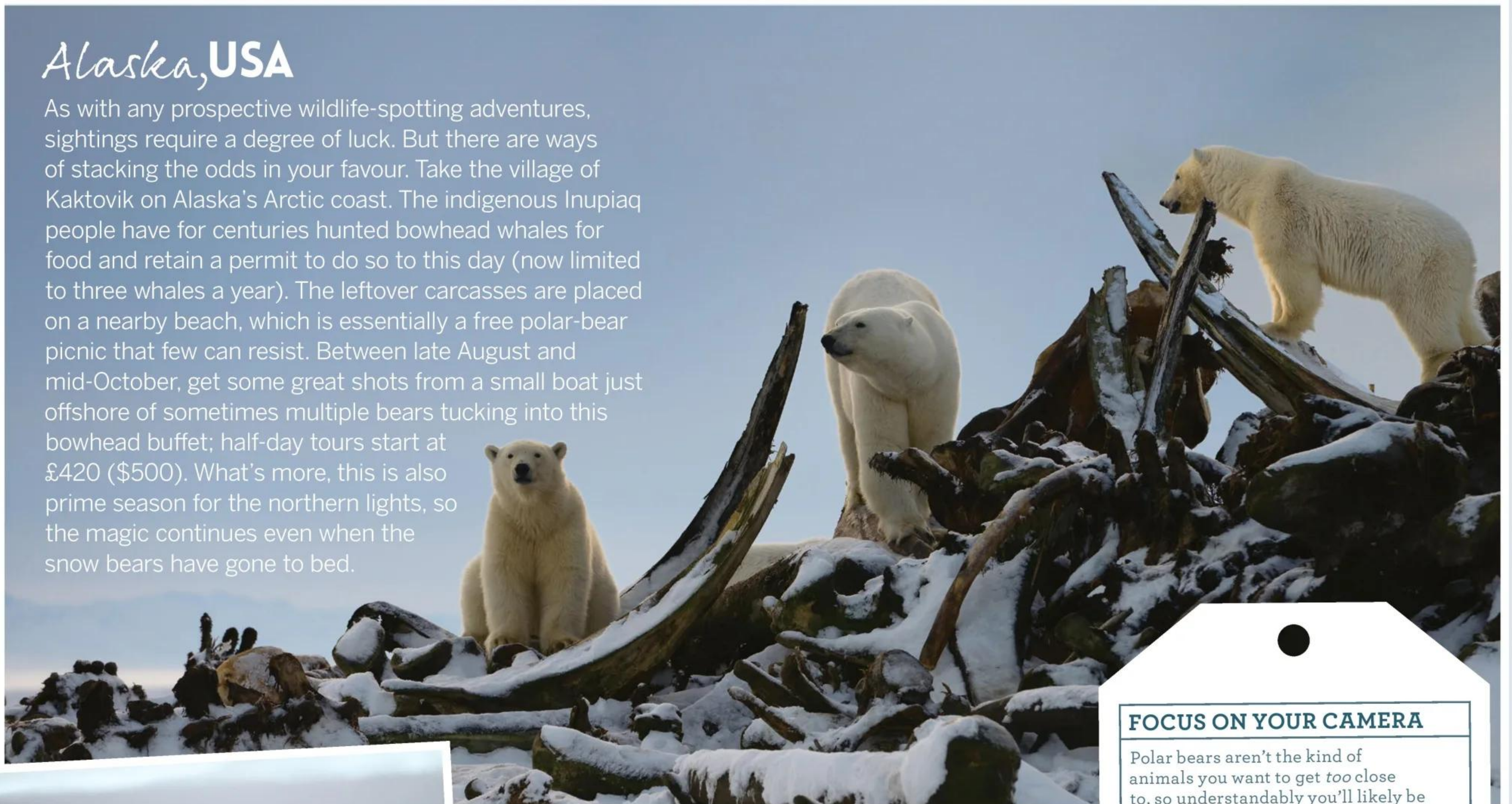
It's an epic undertaking to travel the breadth of America, but you'll certainly be rewarded for it

SEE POLAR BEARS IN THE WILD

Wrap up tight for an opportunity to watch snow bears presiding over their icy domain

Alaska, USA

As with any prospective wildlife-spotting adventures, sightings require a degree of luck. But there are ways of stacking the odds in your favour. Take the village of Kaktovik on Alaska's Arctic coast. The indigenous Inupiaq people have for centuries hunted bowhead whales for food and retain a permit to do so to this day (now limited to three whales a year). The leftover carcasses are placed on a nearby beach, which is essentially a free polar-bear picnic that few can resist. Between late August and mid-October, get some great shots from a small boat just offshore of sometimes multiple bears tucking into this bowhead buffet; half-day tours start at £420 (\$500). What's more, this is also prime season for the northern lights, so the magic continues even when the snow bears have gone to bed.



FOCUS ON YOUR CAMERA

Polar bears aren't the kind of animals you want to get *too* close to, so understandably you'll likely be observing them from a distance. Take a camera with a decent zoom lens to compensate for this, as well as spare batteries to mitigate against unexpected power drain in the cold conditions.

Churchill, Manitoba, CANADA

Often described as the 'Polar Bear Capital of the World', this unassuming town on the shore of Hudson Bay is one of the most accessible destinations to see these majestic mammals, a 2.5-hour flight north of Winnipeg. Primetime to visit is October and November as up to 1,000 bears converge in this region, awaiting the sea-ice to refreeze. The snow-bear-spotting vehicle of choice here is the 'Tundra Buggy' – all-terrain beasts with massive tyres that are sturdily built to withstand both the harsh landscape and any overly curious bears – they sometimes come right up to the windows! Better yet, an all-electric buggy was introduced in 2022, the first step into making the entire fleet more eco-friendly. An autumn buggy trip will set you back around £340 (\$400).



Svalbard, NORWAY

It's oft claimed there are more polar bears than humans in the archipelago of Svalbard, some 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) north of mainland Norway. While that myth has been debunked, it remains an *Ursus maritimus* hotspot. The best chance of an encounter is on one of the expedition cruises that patrol the channels between northern Spitsbergen (Svalbard's largest island) and the pack ice in summer (May to September), which average about £3,400 (\$4,000) for a week. Day trips on nippier Zodiac craft enable you to get closer, not just to bears but other Arctic wildlife too. Snowmobile tours on Spitsbergen also venture into polar-bear territory for those who'd rather stay on terra firma.

Take a trip through the treetops for a memorable adventure



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Wear closed-toed shoes – you don't want your flip-flops to be flung off into the jungle.

Location:

Fig Tree Drive rainforest, Antigua

Time zone:

UTC -4

Best time to visit:

December to May to avoid the rainy season.



60 ZIPLINE IN THE RAINFOREST

Monkey about through the trees of Antigua

If you've always wondered how Tarzan felt swinging from vine to vine through the rainforest, head to the beautiful island of Antigua and join a zipline canopy tour (linen cloth optional). Ranging in length from 16 metres (52 feet) to 100 metres (328 feet), the various ziplines criss-crossing through the trees are interspersed with suspension bridges, rope obstacles, platforms, aerial walkways and treehouses. Heights of the ziplines vary, with the loftiest being a dizzying 91 metres (298 feet) above the ground. If you're feeling gutsy, you can

opt to do the vertical descent... as well as 'The Leap of Faith' and 'The Screamer'. Might be best if you don't look down!

Do look all around you, though. Located in the lush Fig Tree Drive rainforest, you'll be met with greenery galore and the chorus of a number of bird species. The gorge hosts a plethora of enormous trees, prominent boulders, a rock pool, vines, mosses, lichens and wild fruits. It's terrifically tropical. You may also be met by a few unwelcome members of Mother Nature's brood; wear insect repellent.

The heavier you are, the faster you'll travel on the ziplines so, if you want a zoomier experience, tuck into plenty of fungee and pepperpot (cornmeal similar to polenta with a type of stew) – Antigua's national dish – before you hit the cables. There is no minimum age to take part – in fact, children as young as four years old have ziplined here. Expect to pay around £70 (\$80) for an hour's ziplining adventure.

If this sounds like it's right up your street, start practising your chest beating and jungle call right away!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Take sandals with you to make it easy to get in and out of the pools. Be careful of the sharp rocks and stones! ➔

Location:

Pamukkale, Turkey

Time zone:

UTC +3



Best time to visit:

The spring and autumn months for good weather without the bustle of the main tourist season.



The pools can get really busy during the tourist season so you may want to arrive early in the morning or before sunset to beat the crowds

61 DIP IN PAMUKKALE'S SPRINGS

Sit back and relax in the region's natural hot springs while taking in the stunning Turkish scenery

Nestled among the hills of southwest Turkey, the beautiful white water pools of Pamukkale are famed for their alleged miraculous healing properties, and have been used as a spa since the 2nd century BCE. There are 17 thermal springs in total, and today there are two main pools that are available for visitors to bathe in. Many of those other springs are now closed off from the public in order to preserve their natural beauty, but even though you can't

swim in them, they are still gorgeous to observe from a distance.

Tickets for entry to the hot springs are currently priced at £9.30 (\$11) per person, with an additional charge of £5.92 (\$7) for the Cleopatra Pool, and these are subject to change. There's so much to see nearby, so make sure you leave time to explore the well-preserved ruins of Hierapolis. Changing facilities are available for bathers by the pools, and there's also a stunning archeology

museum nearby, which is housed in an ancient Roman bath, gymnasium and library. You can even go hot air ballooning for fantastic views of the pools from the skies!

It's relatively easy to get to Pamukkale via the domestic flights to Denizli that run daily from Istanbul Airport. Your onward journey will then be around one hour from the airport, either using the shuttle service or by taxi, depending on your preference.



© Getty



You can bathe in the natural spring pool also known as the Cleopatra Pool in the ancient site of Hierapolis

62

GO ZERO-G

The feeling of space flight without leaving French airspace

The ultimate epic adventure – flying to space – is an unrealistic option for most of us, but space nerds can re-create the experience by taking a zero gravity flight on board a specially modified aeroplane. Usually the preserve of trainee astronauts and scientists, the plane flies in parabolic arcs – steep climbs followed by steady descents – that give those on board the feeling of weightlessness for 30 seconds during the plunge. A five-hour flight typically includes 15 parabolic arcs, each taking around 16 kilometres (ten miles) of airspace to perform. Pilots can also re-create the limited gravity on the Moon or Mars by flying shallower arcs.

Passengers have an eerie feeling the first time the plane reaches the peak of its climb and their backsides begin to lift off the floor. An empty section of the plane enables them to tumble,

turn and float without being hindered by seats and other fixtures as the plane enters its freefall phase. Padded walls make sure there are no accidents, but that doesn't stop the odd person from needing to use the sick bags tucked into their pockets. There's a reason these planes are nicknamed 'the Vomit Comets'. Half a minute seems to pass in a moment. Passengers tumble back to the floor and feel heavier than normal as the plane pulls up and begins to climb again.

This version of space flight still isn't for everyone. An Air Zero G Airbus A310 operates out of Bordeaux and costs around £5,800 (\$7,000). On the other side of the Atlantic, a modified Boeing 727 belonging to Zero-G flies in the USA and costs upwards of £6,500 (\$8,000). However, a flight and float aboard a zero gravity plane really is an out-of-this-world experience.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Take anti-sickness medication before the flight to avoid feeling sick during the parabolic arcs.

Location:

Bordeaux, France

Time zone:

UTC +1

Best time to visit:

No flights take place in winter to avoid weather-related cancellations.



Right © Alamy

If you have the money, cheating gravity is one adventure you won't forget



The famous pufferfish lantern, which used to attract visitors to Osaka's shopping district

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure that the restaurant in which you're eating your fugu displays their chef's certificate to prepare the dish ✈

Location:

Japan

Time zone:

Various

Best time to visit:

Fresh fugu is best eaten in the winter, so head out to Japan between December and February for best results.



63

EAT FUGU IN JAPAN

You've heard of Death by Chocolate – but how about trying potential Death by Blowfish?

Usually if you are presented with a meal that has the potential to kill you, it's as a result of a disaster in the kitchen. However, eating fugu in Japan is the exact opposite – it's the result of some incredibly skilled work in the kitchen that needs to go very, very right. Fugu is a Japanese delicacy, the flesh of the blowfish that can be served in a variety of ways, including grilled, stewed and as sashimi. It has a delicate flavour and a slightly chewy texture, but the main draw is the possibility that it could be your last meal. That's because the fish's ovaries and

liver contain neurotoxins that could prove fatal if eaten. Dozens used to die each year after eating poorly-prepared fugu, now it's down to single figures and most are those who have a go themselves. Only a trace of blood or organ needs to enter your body to hospitalise you, which is why chefs need to train for at least two years to take the exam to be allowed to prepare fugu in a restaurant. More than half of those who take the exam fail, so you know you're only being fed by the best. And because of that, great pride is always taken with the presentation and taste of

the dish, making it safe, beautiful and delicious – a great combination for any foodie we're sure you'll agree! Eating fugu in Japan is one of those truly unique adventures that anyone with an interest in food should try. Not only is it worth trying the food for the sake of a new and interesting flavour, but it's the only chance foodies will get to experience the same kind of adrenaline-pumping thrill that bungee jumpers and skydivers get to enjoy. Skilled prep means it's unlikely to be your last meal, but if it is, what a way to go!

64

ABSEIL A WATERFALL

Here's a thrilling experience that flies in the face of the advice 'don't look down'

So many of the world's greatest, most exciting adventures are the ones that have us face a fear. Abseiling is one such activity, since it literally needs you to get over that pesky vertigo as you tiptoe over the edge of a sheer rock face and down towards the ground hundreds of metres below. Now that's not to say that in the majority of cases this uneasy drop isn't incredibly safe, because it is, but that feeling of dread that you're about to wilfully do something very stupid is what gets adrenaline lovers to take that plunge.

Of course, there are numerous places to experience some great and life-affirming

abseiling, but Costa Rica might be one of the best places to go. As a country, it is covered in lush rainforest, which in itself makes for a very exciting and – for most of us – novel place to be. But with the rising popularity of abseiling, there are numerous tours that will get you plummeting down alongside a waterfall, too.

Termed 'canyoning' rather than just abseiling, these adventurous tours will get you to hike through some of the country's most beautiful natural landscapes while also stopping off to abseil beside a waterfall. But they'll typically come with much more, too, with many of these tours incorporating zip-lining through jungle

canopies, swimming in gorgeous emerald waters or exploring deep into the caverns of the canyons.

Naturally where you go and what you'll see depends on the tour you take, but with countless potential destinations to give this a try, it's certainly something to look up if you're already planning a trip to Costa Rica. Some will have you descend alongside waterfalls more than 35 metres (110 feet) high; others will add in unaided waterfall drops through rivers and streams. The jungles of Costa Rica perhaps weren't made to be a thrillseeker's playground, but the Costa Ricans have certainly figured out a way of making that happen.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

You're guaranteed to get wet, so think of wearing clothes that will dry quickly, especially when it comes to your hiking boots.

Location:

Costa Rica

Time zone:

UTC-6

Best time to visit:

Mid-December to April for the dry season.



It can be nerve wracking at first, but abseiling is more a matter of careful technique than anything else



How close you can get to the gorillas will depend on the tour itself, and the mood of the gorillas

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

You should make a concerted effort to train before leaving for Rwanda; you don't need to be a peak performance human, but you will need a good level of fitness.

Location:

*Volcanoes National Park,
Rwanda*

Time zone:

UTC+2

Best time to visit:

June to September, for the drier months.



65 MEET WITH MOUNTAIN GORILLAS

There aren't many treks that will leave you with an emotional memory for life quite like this one

Within these pages we've (hopefully) given you inspiration for all sorts of new and unexpected experiences. Some are thrilling, some are moving, and some are even tiring. But to visit Rwanda and explore its jungles in search of an endangered animal like the mountain gorilla is all three. There are few experiences that can leave an indelible mark on you and perhaps even change your outlook on the natural world.

There are a handful of places where you'll be able to head out to find mountain gorillas in the world, but with half of the planet's mountain gorilla populace inhabiting Rwanda, you'll have a better chance here than anywhere.

Unsurprisingly a portion of Rwanda's tourism industry is dedicated to jungle safaris tracking these stunning mammals, so you'll find a number of tour companies available to help you see a real-life gorilla. Naturally it's here where you'll want to focus your energy on the research, since a well-rated tour guide will undoubtedly want to make sure you're ready for what's to come.

And that's important because, as you might expect, it's a slog heading through the mountains. This is not an experience for the faint-hearted and you'll need to be able to tap into a solid stamina pool. Living among the mountains of the Rwandan Volcanoes National Park, these gorillas won't be easygoing; you'll often need to scurry

through uncontrolled nature and clamber about like a gorilla yourself. Most tours will have you out in the wilds for three days, so it's not your everyday walk in a national park.

Some tours will even teach you about tracking and foraging for food among the jungle, learn about the history of Dian Fossey and her groundbreaking research, and see plenty of other primates besides. And remember that this doesn't just need to be about the gorillas, but also about exploring a country rich in culture. Discover the colourful capital of Kigali and find time for many of the other treats on display in Rwanda. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience – you may as well make the most of it.

66

HIKE ACROSS THE PERITO MORENO GLACIER

Experience the might and majesty of nature with a journey across Argentina's spectacular glacier

At the heart of Argentina's Parque Nacional Los Glaciares, amidst the snow-capped peaks of the Andes, lies the mighty Perito Moreno Glacier. Named after the explorer Francisco Moreno, the sprawling glacier – a survivor of the Ice Age – stretches 30 kilometres (19 miles) long and soars 70 metres (230 feet) above the electric blue water of Canal de Los Témpanos, or Iceberg Channel.

While Perito Moreno Glacier is one of the only advancing glaciers in the world – growing around two metres (seven feet) each day – it's also one of the most accessible. So accessible that after

donning crampons, adventurers can actually trek across its majestic surface.

An otherworldly experience, explorers snake past bottomless cracks, magnificent ice towers and chasmic caves in a kaleidoscope of colours – from blinding white and aquamarine, to grey and turquoise. Vast and seemingly impregnable, the glacier commands respect and offers, in return, quiet serenity. Serenity that is only interrupted by the occasional creak, groan and reverberating roar as double-decker-sized icebergs calve from the glacier face – crumbling like icing sugar before crashing into the water below.

Those keen to test their mettle on Perito Moreno Glacier and witness nature's powerful volatility have two options: Mini Trekking and Big Ice. Costing about £245 (\$300), Mini Trekking offers a 90-minute excursion and is suitable for those aged ten to 65 of average fitness. Meanwhile, the £410 (\$500) three-hour Big Ice presents more of a physical challenge, and is suitable for those aged 18 to 50. Whichever route travellers select, they can look forward to a well-timed drinks break, complete with bar cart, Scottish malt whisky, and ice cubes hacked fresh from the glacier.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Wear a pair of sturdy hiking boots instead of trainers, as crampons are attached directly to shoes.

Location:

Patagonia, Argentina

Time zone:

UTC-3

Best time to visit:

September, to avoid the crowds.



One of the only advancing glaciers in the world, Perito Moreno Glacier grows by up to 2m (7ft) a day

© Getty

67

CLIMB THE EIFFEL TOWER

Take the stairs for an inside encounter with the French capital's iron icon

Going up the Eiffel Tower isn't a unique or exclusive experience. Seven million people flock to the monument every year. However, the vast majority queue for the lifts. So how about taking the quieter route and gain a more intimate view of the Iron Lady by foot?

More adventurous visitors buy a stairs-only ticket at the stairwell entrance in the south pillar.

This gives them the opportunity to marvel at the jigsaw of lattice beams and rivets that enable the tower to reach 330 metres (1,082 feet) at its highest point – the stairs offer a view into the perfectly engineered heart of the tower. If the whole lattice structure was melted down, the molten liquid would fill the tower's base to a depth of just 6.25 centimetres (2.46 inches).

There are 327 steps to the first floor, where a brief rest awaits. Walk across the glass panelled floor to see exactly how far you've travelled from ground level. Traipsing up another 347 steps provides access to the second floor. A well-deserved snack can be bought here, though keep your eye on the price tag. The Michelin-starred fare at Le Jules Verne restaurant will more than compensate for the calories burned on the 114-metre (374-feet) ascent.

The third-story staircase was dismantled in 1983 so there's no option apart from the lifts if you want to complete the journey from the second floor to the top – your burning thighs will thank you since it's another 161 metres (529 feet) to the top. The bird's-eye view up here is magnificent, although photographers often find their best shots are taken lower down on the staircase landings. As long as you're relatively healthy and take it easy, there's no reason you can't enjoy the same views.

As you leave the Tower, turn back and marvel at how high you've climbed

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Leave plenty of time for your trek – you should allow at least 45 minutes to climb the stairs.

Location:

Paris, France

Time zone:

UTC +1

Best time to visit:

Don't be afraid to visit in the summer season since you'd be skipping the queues.



Little legs may find the climb a mammoth task. There is an elevator if you don't fancy climbing all the steps!



The panoramic view of Paris is worth the climb

“The brilliant white plains stretch out in front of you as far as the eye can see”

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Check before you travel that your car hire will allow you to drive on the salt flats. Some don't and others will require extra insurance.

Location:

Uyuni, Bolivia

Time zone:

UTC -4



Best time to visit:

May to November for thick salt, but December to April is rainy season for incredible mirror-like salt lakes.

68

DRIVE ACROSS SALAR DE UYUNI

Getting salty is a good thing in this memorable natural Bolivian wonder

Some epic drives are iconic because of the richness of the views, whether they be rugged mountains, stunning countryside or wild oceans. But how about a drive that is notable because of the sheer lack of anything anywhere? That's what you would experience if you took a 4x4 onto the mind-bending, other-worldly landscape that is Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia. The result of an ancient lake drying up on the Altiplano plateau, Salar de Uyuni is the world's biggest salt flat, measuring an incredible 10,500 square-kilometres (4,000 square-miles). As the name suggests, it is both very salty, with some areas of salt crust measuring ten metres

(33 feet) deep, and very flat, meaning that the brilliant white plains stretch out in front of you as far as the eye can see, 3,600 metres (12,000 feet) above sea level.

Being so remote, adventurers need to make sure their preparation is immaculate if they're to have a memorable experience for all the right reasons. It is essential to prepare the vehicle well, as often there are no places to fill up on food, water or fuel for hours at a time. Plenty of tours are available and have the advantages of safety and local know-how, while the benefits of hiring your own vehicle are the freedom, thrill and satisfaction of tackling this epic adventure

without a guide. It's all down to the experience you want.

Starting from Sucre, you drive/are driven towards Uyuni where your adventure begins. Your vehicle circles the plain before cutting across it at safe entry points, while your eyes take in the never-ending expanse. Occasionally there is something to draw your attention, whether it be a group of cacti, the monument for when the Dakar Rally crossed Salar de Uyuni, or one of the salt hotels on the perimeter. But mostly this drive will be a quiet, isolated, unique experience. Salar de Uyuni may be a dried-up lake, but the joy you feel at completing this adventure will never dry up.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

If you're taking the public boat, get to the dock early and buy your tickets there on the day as they're often cheaper than pre-booking.

Location:

Mekong River, Laos

Time zone:

UTC+7



Best time to visit:

October to November and March to April avoids peak season and the most crowded boats.



The Pak Ou Caves are a particular highlight on a private slow boat cruise

69 SLOWBOAT THE MEKONG RIVER

Get on a slow boat to the South China Sea in this relaxing adventure

Many of those who have travelled around South East Asia have commented on the incredible two-paced nature of the region. The cities are full of hustle and bustle, tooting horns and quick-tongued salespeople, while the rural areas are among the most peaceful and serene they have ever encountered. If you're after the latter kind of adventure, what could possibly sound more relaxing than taking a two-day slow boat journey through some of Laos' most stunning countryside?

The Mekong River is one of the longest in the world, meandering through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, before spilling out into the South China Sea. One of

the most popular ways to enjoy the waterway is to take a slow boat from Huay Xai on the Thai-Laos border across to Luang Prabang in northern Laos. The gentle chug-chug of the boat and the blissful, untouched scenery could be a scene from a hundred years ago and that is one of the biggest appeals of this adventure, the transport transporting you back to a time before smartphones, satnavs and commercial planes.

There are two options for those wanting to take this journey: public or private. The public boat is essentially a commuter vehicle, leaving early each morning. This option is generally cheaper and can cost as little as £12 (\$14) for the two-day trip. It will be crowded, noisy and you'll have to bring/

buy your own food, but it will give you a more authentic experience. For a more genteel cruise, you can book through a tour operator, where you're guaranteed a seat, accommodation, meals and transfers from around £130 (\$160). The private slow boats also take in the Pak Ou Caves, home to more than 5,000 Buddha statues, which is an experience in itself.

Whichever option you choose, you are guaranteed a memorable experience, as your boat floats you past tree-covered mountains, traditional Laotian villages and soaring cliffs. This is a spectacular way to enjoy the beautiful country of Laos and one that will definitely have you appreciating the slower side of life.

70

GET CATAPULTED

Experience the rush of being hurled over New Zealand's Nevis Valley

Boundaries are there to be pushed, right? Well, how about you push boundaries while being pushed yourself at a mind-bending 100 kilometres (62 miles) per hour over a raging river? If you're still reading, that probably means that the Nevis Catapult is the adventure for you.

You'll likely be familiar with the concept of the bungee jump. Participants stand on the edge of a ledge before leaping off into the void, trusting their life to a rubberised rope that sends them yo-yo-ing up and down before rescue arrives. Now imagine that, but horizontally.

That's what the team at AJ Hackett Bungy in New Zealand started offering in 2018. Thrill-seekers are strapped into a harness, attached to a bungee cord and floated out of the pod at a 45-degree angle so they're looking at the floor of the Nevis Valley hundreds of metres below. Then a high-tech winch system launches them 150 metres (492 feet) across the valley in true Buzz Lightyear 'falling with style' style. Participants will experience up to 3G of force as they hurtle through the air towards the opposite wall of the valley. Gravity then realises what the hell is going on and you curve towards

the river below, eventually swinging to a halt when you can take a much-needed deep breath and admire the stunning views as you're winched back up to safety.

There are other sites in the world where you can be catapulted across a ravine or valley, but the Nevis Catapult is the largest in the world, so this is the one that will give you the ultimate thrill. Prices start at £105 (\$115) if you book far enough in advance. If bungee jumping has ceased to provide you with the adrenaline rush you need, the Nevis Catapult adds a whole new dimension to thrill-seeking. To infinity, and beyond.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

For a less extreme experience, you can try the Nevis Bungy or Nevis Swing, while the fun averse can just enjoy the views from the pod.

Location:

Nevis Valley,
New Zealand

Time zone:

UTC+12

Best time to visit:

January to May is a good time to try the catapult, as you have the best chance of good weather.



The winch system sends thrill-seekers 150m (492ft) across the valley at 100kmh (62mph) experiencing 3G of force



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

It's about 18°C (64.4°F) underground, so make sure you wear clothes to keep you warm.

Location:
Wieliczka, Poland

Time zone:
UTC+1

Best time to visit:
The mine is open all year round but allow three hours in total and maybe book ahead during summer.

CURRENCY

zł
POLISH
ZŁOTY

St Kinga's Chapel is 101m (331ft) underground and it's one of the highlights of the tour

71 VISIT A SUBTERRANEAN CITY

Any seasoned adventure seeker worth their salt will find pleasure in this underground world

In the historic town of Wieliczka, about 13 kilometres (eight miles) away from Kraków, there's a stunning, hidden city like no other on Earth. Comprising more than 287 kilometres (178 miles) of jaw-dropping chambers and tunnels linked in an intricate maze, it reaches a maximum depth of 327 metres (1,073 feet). More astonishing than that, it's also made predominantly of salt!

But that's because it's actually a mine – the Wieliczka Salt Mine, to be exact. Located in the south of Poland, the first shafts were dug in the 13th century and, over many subsequent decades, the miners not only unearthed mineral deposits but created numerous focal points,

among them a set of chapels, the grandest of which is St Kinga's Chapel.

Stretching to a length of 54 metres (177 feet) with a height of 12 metres (39 metres) and a width of 18 metres (59 feet), this ornate chapel includes a three-piece altar that was carved over more than 30 years. There's also a bas-relief of *The Last Supper*, a statue of Pope John Paul II and a nativity scene. When you look up, you'll see rock salt crystal chandeliers, too.

Yet that's not all. The tour starts with a narrow walk down 380 steps whereupon you are guided through 2% of the mine. You will be able to see saline lakes, ramparts and a museum as you snake around the passages. You'll also spot

examples of the tools used to mine the salt, ranging from winches to buckets, which give you a good idea of the vast amount of effort involved. At times, you'll also see white fluffy salt in among the grey and you can reach out to feel their texture and maybe even taste it.

It really feels like an *Indiana Jones*-style adventure with the natural formations proving to be just as stunning as those created by the miners, particularly as they are all beautifully lit for added atmosphere. It certainly won't take long for you to realise just why the mines became part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. You'll never see table salt in quite the same way again!

72 EXPERIENCE A WILDLIFE MIGRATION

See the cycles of the natural world when vast populations move as one



Monarch butterflies, MEXICO

Who knew that butterflies are such sunseekers? Every winter, more than half of the monarch butterflies in the eastern United States and Canada escape the chill and migrate to the warmer climes of Mexico. Up to a billion monarchs rest up in just 14 colonies in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve located near Mexico City. So impressive is their sense of direction that family groups hibernate in the same trees for generations. Viewing the kaleidoscopes (is there a better collective noun in the natural world?) of butterflies as they end their 5,000-kilometre (3,100-mile) journey is one of the world's finest wildlife spectacles.

Emperor penguins, ANTARCTICA

It's not easy to watch the march of the penguins in real life: take a cruise ship to the Weddell Sea from the southern tip of Argentina, land at Brown Bluff in Antarctica and hop on a helicopter before hiking the last stretch to the emperor penguin rookery at Snow Hill. But imagine how difficult it is for the birds themselves: they must walk more than 100 kilometres (62 miles) to their ancestral breeding grounds where they lay and protect a single egg, enduring temperatures of -62 degrees Celsius (-80 degrees Fahrenheit) and losing half their bodyweight until their partner relieves them.



GO WILD, NOT ARTIFICIAL

Stick to observation only. Encounters that promise a hands-on experience tend to be those that interfere with the natural world and can lead to the maltreatment and exploitation of wildlife. Watch from afar and don't be tempted to stroke or feed.

Wildebeest and zebra, KENYA AND TANZANIA

The grass actually is greener on the other side. Every year, two million wildebeest and zebra trek across the border between Tanzania and Kenya, from the Serengeti National Park to the Maasai Mara in Kenya, in search of fresh pasture. Wildlife watchers who can stomach witnessing the circle of life unfold in all its gruesome detail should aim to be at the Mara River in August. Hungry herbivores congregate on the banks knowing that fresh grass awaits on the other side, but to get there they must run the gauntlet of hungry crocodiles who have been anticipating their arrival.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

While desert temperatures soar during the day, they drop significantly come nightfall, so warm clothes and sleeping bags are recommended.

Location:

Jordan

Time zone:

UTC +2

Best time to visit:

March to May or September to November for mildest weather.



The otherworldly valley of Wadi Rum has been featured in a wide array of films, ranging from *Lawrence of Arabia* to *Star Wars*

73

CAMP IN THE DESERT

Make like the Bedouins and bed down beneath the twinkling desert night sky

Much has been made of the wonders of sleeping outdoors, beneath the beauty of the night sky, but nowhere is it more magical than in Jordan. Whether bedding down in the Martian landscapes of Wadi Rum, nicknamed the Valley of the Moon, or in the shadows of the Lost City of Petra, the country is a camping bucket-list mainstay.

Following the footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia, many campers head straight to the otherworldly and beautifully desolate Wadi Rum. Though this vast ocean of undulating sand dunes and colossal red-rock formations seems uninhabitable, Stone Age petroglyphs and lingering Bedouins testify to 12,000 years of human history. Today, camping and glamping sites punctuate the rugged desert, offering

weary travellers a place to rest their heads after an evening of hearty food, shared stories and steaming cups of cardamom-infused tea.

The family-run Hasan Zawaideh Camp features tents, alongside the newer glamping bubbles designed for stargazing. Meanwhile, nestled at Little Bridge, one of the region's most famous rock formations, the eco-friendly Beyond Wadi Rum Camp keeps things simple with traditional tents, Jeep tours and large meals served by the open campfire. Around 25 kilometres (16 miles) north, the futuristic 'Martian domes' of SunCity Camp erupt from the horizon. Complete with white linen, a minibar and en-suite bathrooms, the site offers luxury in the desert.

Meanwhile, nature lovers are lured by Dana Biosphere Reserve. Home to around 600 plant

species, each spring the hillsides come alive with citrus trees, junipers, desert acacias and date palms. Surprisingly, 180 bird specials and 45 mammals – of which 25 are endangered species – also call this corner of the country home. Nestled in the heart of the reserve is the Rummana Campsite. Open from the middle of March to the end of October, with 20 large tents, bathrooms and barbecues, it's the place for those seeking an authentic experience.

No trip to Jordan would be complete without witnessing the wonder of Petra. Carved directly into colossal red cliffs, the prehistoric capital is testament to the genius of its founders. Close by, the Seven Wonders Bedouin Camp offers traditional Bedouin tent accommodation, hearty food and a magical atmosphere.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

The weather is going to be hot and humid, so make sure you stay hydrated, especially if you are dancing. ✈️

Location:

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Time zone:

UTC -3

Best time to visit:

Rio Carnival starts the Friday before Ash Wednesday.



Shimmy those hips over to Rio and immerse yourself in a party you will never forget!



74 JOIN THE PARADE AT THE RIO CARNIVAL

Feel the Brazilian beats at the biggest party in the world

How would you like to be part of the 'Greatest Show on Earth'? We don't mean tapping your feet and swaying along with the music from your nosebleed seat; we mean marching, dancing and sweating in the actual Rio Carnival parade! Dressed in fabulous feathers, gorgeous glitter and sensational sequins, you can be one of the six million people getting their samba on in Brazil's yearly passion-fuelled, multiple-day celebration.

The parades during Rio Carnival are a contest between various samba schools and, along with

their core performers, every school allows a number of other participants to be part of their parade – many joining in the fun from around the globe. That's where you come in. Selecting your school and costume online prior to the event, you pick up your glam getup on the day of the performance, then head to the Sambadrome Marquês de Sapucaí, where the spectacle takes place... and keep your fingers crossed that you don't make a spectacle of yourself.

Thankfully there's no dance routine to learn (imagine the two-left-feet carnage!) but you

will need to remain in a formation. Your choice of school and therefore outfit may be largely dictated by your budget, seeing as costumes can range from a couple of hundred pounds/dollars to thousands. There are a number of websites to browse for more information – try www.rio.com to get started.

Inside the Sambadrome, it's a feeling unlike any other. Soaking in the bright lights, dazzling floats, thrilling atmosphere and cheering crowds will get your heart racing, your mind buzzing and your body moving. Pack your best dancing shoes!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Although Fuji isn't the most technically challenging mountain to scale, inexperienced hikers may want to hire a guide. ➔

Location:

Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, Shizuoka and Yamanashi, Japan

Time zone:

UTC +9



Best time to visit:

Hiking season runs from early July to September, and is busiest in August.

“Mount Fuji has long been revered as a spiritually significant place by members of the Fujiko folk faith”

75

CLIMB MOUNT FUJI

Immortalised by poets and artists, the volcanic peak of Japan's Mount Fuji needs to be explored

One of the planet's most recognisable natural landmarks, Mount Fuji in Japan has long been revered as a spiritually significant place by members of the Fujiko folk faith. Today, it's a beacon for adventurers from across the globe – a mighty mountain to be conquered, with views through the clouds of glistening lakes and luscious mountains wrapped in 1,000-year-old cedars.

Towering 3,776 metres (12,390 feet) tall, Fuji invites hikers to follow along ancient pilgrimage routes, past the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples that punctuate its storied slopes. The

mountain's hiking season runs from early July to September, with trails most crowded in the middle of August during the country's Obon holidays. Although there are several ways to make your way up the volcanic World Heritage Site, which last erupted in 1707, the most popular is the Yoshida Trail.

Like the other routes, the Yoshida Trail starts at the fifth of ten 'stations' posted along the mountain, and climbs 15 kilometres (nine miles) up towards the summit. The scenic trail requires about six hours to ascend and three to descend, although the journey can be broken up

with a short rest at a mountain hut if required. While the trail can be conquered in a single day, some prefer to stop overnight at the seventh or eighth station, before reaching the summit at daybreak to soak in a spectacular sunrise. Surprisingly affordable, visitors are asked to contribute approximately £6.60 (\$7.50) each to collection stations at each trailhead to help cover maintenance costs. An overnight stay costs around £50 (\$60) per person, a price that also includes two meals.

Although shorter than Yoshida, the Fujinomiya Trail is more unforgiving, with steeper trails. On



An active volcano, Fuji
last erupted in 1707

76 HANG GLIDE

Take to the skies to witness Switzerland's beauty

The breathtaking experience of hang gliding is the perfect activity for any true adventure lover. Although hang-gliding experiences are available in various countries, the Interlaken District in Switzerland is frequently cited as one of the best locations for it in the world. In this picturesque region, you'll be able to take in an epic bird's-eye view of the Swiss Alps and all of its lakes, mountains and meadows.

There are a few guide companies that provide hang-gliding tours and all flights are conducted with a professional pilot. While hang gliding is considered a safe activity, each tour will include a safety briefing and it is very important that you listen to the instructor's advice, to ensure that you have the best – and safest – experience you possibly can.

Hang-gliding tours typically last for around one to two hours, which usually includes picking

you up from your accommodation, while the flight itself will be around 10-20 minutes long depending on weather conditions. Hang gliding can be enjoyed by individuals or the whole family, as it is appropriate for most age groups.

One of the very best things about hang gliding is that it can be tailored to exactly how you want it, whether that's a smooth glide through the sky or a flight filled with exhilarating dives and wingovers. Before you take flight, your instructor will show you some basic moves to help you get the most out of your gliding adventure. Once you're up in the sky, any nerves you may have will disappear as you take in the spectacular scenery below you. During your flight, there will usually be someone on the ground capturing the experience for you on camera, so you will be able to buy a video or photo as a souvenir of your awesome adventure up in the skies!

Enjoy a view of the Swiss Alps
usually only seen by birds



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure to wear long trousers and appropriate footwear when you take to the skies. Flappy fabric isn't ideal!

Location:
*Interlaken District,
Switzerland*

Time zone:
UTC +1

Best time to visit:
April to November, for the best chance
of suitable weather conditions.



77

KAYAK IN ANTARCTICA

Experience the Arctic Ocean up close during an expedition to Antarctica

Whether you're trekking through Antarctica or you're stopping off as part of a cruise, traversing the ocean in a kayak is an unmissable experience. Led by an experienced guide, you'll have the chance to navigate the waters up close. Prepare to see glistening icebergs expanding through vast spans of ocean, and have the chance to spot local wildlife.

This excursion may be pricy, but it's worth it if you want to get the most out of your visit.

Tickets will typically cost upwards of £800 (\$946) per person, and for that price you'll have the opportunity to spend hours gliding through the glassy waters, usually in small groups and with the help of an experienced guide. Enjoy paddling through the tranquil water, past enormous icebergs – you might even be lucky enough to spot penguins, seals and other wildlife. It truly is an experience like no other.

To participate in the activity, you do need to be in reasonable physical shape and being able to

swim is essential, although you will of course be provided with the necessary safety equipment. The activity isn't suitable for anyone under 16, so it isn't a family event. It's also worth making sure you are aware of the temperature, which fluctuates wildly throughout the year. Summer takes place between October and March, and temperatures around this time will be close to freezing. During the winter, that can plummet to -30 degrees Celsius (-22 degrees Fahrenheit) and below, depending on the location.

“An experience like no other, explore a part of the world that most people will only ever see on a screen”

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Splurge on quality gloves and socks to keep your fingers and toes warm in the freezing temperatures. ➔

Location:

Antarctica

Time zone:

Various

Best time to visit:

November to March for the summer season, with higher temperatures and longer days.



Among Shrewsbury's former inmates are train robber Robert Welch and London gangster 'Mad' Frankie Fraser



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Try to remember to take a jumper with you, as the cells are cold at night and you are only given a sleeping bag.

Location:

Shrewsbury, UK

Time zone:

UTC



Best time to visit:

Summer to coincide with the full bloom of Shrewsbury's famous floral displays.

78

SLEEP IN A PRISON CELL

Spend a night behind bars in a decommissioned British prison

Ever wondered how you'd cope in the clink? What it's like to bed down as the door slams and the lock turns? If so, Shrewsbury Prison is the place to go. Don't worry, the door is soon unlocked and you are at liberty to explore this recently closed Victorian gaol.

Built in 1877 – though a previous prison sat on the same site from 1793 – Shrewsbury Prison is a bleak icon amidst a pretty English town near the Welsh border. Those unlucky enough to be incarcerated behind its walls once looked across railway tracks to an 11th-century castle, while the barred windows on the other side had a view of Shrewsbury Abbey on the opposite side of the River Severn.

The 12-hour sleepover begins at 8pm, with guests who have been sentenced to a one-night stay taking a walk of shame to their accommodation for the night. The Victorian cell has few amenities – Her Majesty didn't want people staying at her pleasure to enjoy five-star luxury – so a metal bed with a thin mattress and sleeping bag will have to suffice. An ex-prison officer guides the new inmates around the rest of the prison, including the other cell blocks and segregation unit.

They also take their prisoners-for-the-night to the execution suite. Ten men were hanged behind the prison walls, all for murder, the last as recent as 1961. The bodies of the condemned were

buried in the yard but exhumed in 1972. None of them haunt the gaol, although the prison does claim spectral residents in the form of the Grey Lady and the Shadow Man.

Don't bother trying to escape after lights out – only two men ever absconded from the Victorian prison. There's also no need to worry about surviving on porridge alone. The original prison kitchen now provides guests with their choice of hot meals and snacks, while a well-stocked bar means there's no need to smuggle in hooch. The gates reopen after breakfast to release the now-former prisoners back into society, hopefully reformed and rehabilitated, definitely with memories of a most unusual night's sleep.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

You'll have to sign up to a tour because you'll need guidance, protection gear and transport to and from the volcano. ➔

Location:

Cerro Negro,
Nicaragua

Time zone:

UTC -6

Best time to visit:

Between May and November, when there is very little rainfall to spoil your trip.



Volcano boarding is considered an extreme sport and it's not without its dangers



The volcano boards look rather primitive but that's all part of the experience

79

GO VOLCANO BOARDING

Ever fancied sliding down the side of a volcano? Just head to Nicaragua!

When erupting, active volcanoes spew a thick flowing substance called magma and eventually this leaves behind layers of volcanic ash. In the case of the active volcano Cerro Negro in the Cordillera de los Maribios mountain range in Nicaragua, this has provided a golden opportunity that has been seized by many adventurers: the chance to slide or surf down the side of the volcano at breakneck speed.

Invented by Australian Darryn Webb in 2005 and called volcano boarding, this amazing experience is not for the faint hearted and it takes quite a bit of effort, too. First, you need to

spend an hour climbing the 728 metres (2,388 feet) of Central America's youngest volcano. Then, with goggles, gloves and a head scarf to protect you, it's time to get on your metal-bottomed wooden sled and hurtle down at up to 100 kilometres (60 miles) per hour on a journey that'll take about five minutes.

One thing you'll discover (if you're able to think during the descent) is that the volcano is perfect for this activity. The consistent gusts of winds have ensured an even spread of small pieces of ash. Even so, your heart will be in your mouth as you try to steer your way using nothing more

than a rope, while also feeling as if you're riding by the seat of your pants. Some people choose to stand up, but you may want to leave that until you've got a few slides under your belt.

Thankfully, one thing you won't need to worry about is an eruption. Cerro Negro hasn't erupted since 1999 and, while it is due another, is always monitored so you wouldn't be able to take part if there was any danger. That doesn't mean it won't be one of the craziest things you've ever done. But as the world whistles by and gravel is pushed in all directions, you'll feel on top of the world, even when you reach the bottom.

80

WALK WITH LIONS

Dump the Jeep and get close to wildlife on a walking safari



South Luangwa National Park, ZAMBIA

Considered the birthplace of walking safaris, a method of viewing wildlife pioneered in the 1960s, Zambia's South Luangwa National Park still offers one of the best opportunities to view the Big Five on foot. There's also a chance to see subspecies that you won't find anywhere else, including Thornicroft's giraffe, Cookson's wildebeest and Crawshay's zebra. Itineraries often follow the path of the Luangwa River, beginning in lodge accommodation before spending five days under tent canvas and ending at a different safari lodge. Facilities en route are best described as basic, with long-drop toilets and showers hanging off trees, but that's all part of the experience.

Kruger National Park, SOUTH AFRICA

Renowned as being one of the most accessible and family-friendly wildlife destinations in Africa, Kruger National Park is also one of the best to take the first steps on a walking safari. It's well worth ditching the vehicle. Even if the distances covered on foot are shorter, the sounds of the wilderness are amplified without the chug of a diesel engine, and the chances of spotting lions and the rest of the Big Five are just as high – animals are less likely to be spooked, and the trusted guides can spot subtle tracks and signs without having to peer through a windscreen.



Hwange National Park, ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe's walking safari guides are rigorously trained and the safety of both guests and wildlife is paramount. Perhaps the best experience they offer is a ten-kilometre (six-mile) trek between Davison's Camp and Linkwasha Camp in Hwange National Park. It enables guests to get up close and personal with 107 different animal species that roam the park, including the Big Five. During the dry season, an impressive number of elephants congregate in the grasslands. Luggage is ferried between the camps by vehicle, leaving you free to enjoy the guided stroll and look forward to a well-deserved sundowner amidst Linkwasha's luxurious surroundings.



LISTEN AND LEARN

Walking safari guides are there to be listened to and learned from. They keep their guests a safe distance from the wildlife and are usually armed with rifles just in case, but they also teach tracking techniques, such as identifying prints and scat.



The question on a safari is... who's watching who?



JUDGE THE WAVES' POWER

It can sometimes be hard to judge how powerful the swell is before entering the ocean. This is when surf reports become essential. The longer the swell period (the time taken for individual waves to pass a set point), the faster and more powerful they are.

81

SURF THE WORLD'S BEST WAVES

Whatever wave you're looking for, you're sure to find it at one of these top surfing locations



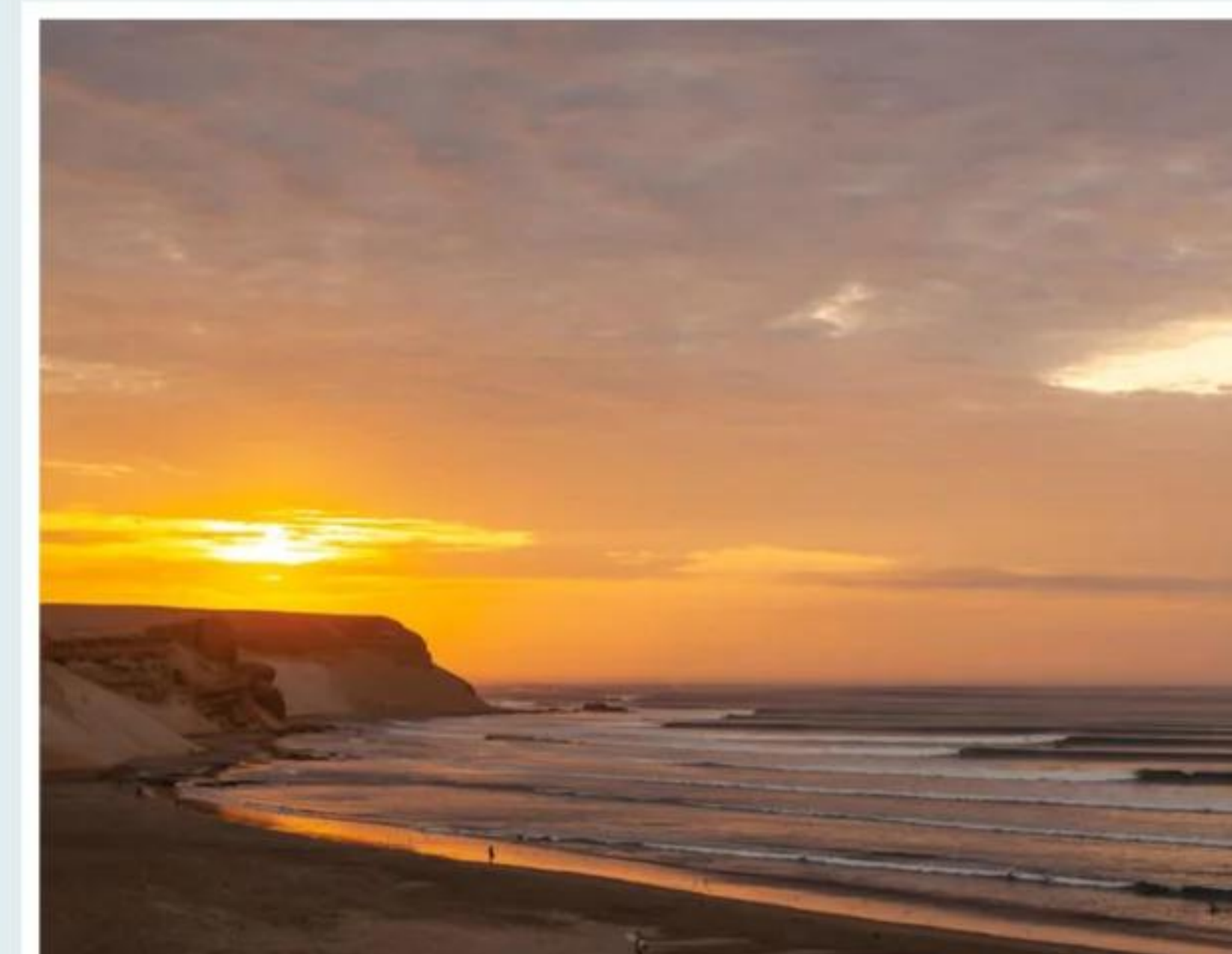
Jeffrey's Bay, SOUTH AFRICA

Commonly known as J-bay, the perfect waves here are due to the cold water of the Atlantic Ocean meeting the warm Indian Ocean. Depending on the conditions, J-bay produces a wide variety of waves suitable for different skill levels. Between April and September, when low pressure weather systems move around the nearby peninsula (Cape of Good Hope), the world's best right-hand waves are formed. These waves can form tubes that continue to break for around 300 metres (984 feet), called 'supertubes'. Supertubes attract the best surfers in the world every July – but you don't have to be one to surf there. Softer waves form at this beach, allowing for other surfers to perfect their techniques safely.

Biarritz, FRANCE

If you're looking for some of the best waves Europe has to offer, look towards southwest France. The beach town of Biarritz is Europe's surf capital, with its waves being one of the first to introduce the idea of wave-riding to the continent. Naturally, this culture was created in Biarritz due to the amazing waves that form there daily. There are five different surf spots in the area, each of them witnessing swell all year round.

For beginners, the best waves at Biarritz's central beach (Côte des Basques) form at low tide, while high tide offers play to the more experienced. The nearby beach resort of Hossegor is home to the Quiksilver Pro France, as its hollow, barrelling waves regularly reach heights of two metres (6.5 feet).



Chicama Beach, PERU

Surfers will rate waves differently based on the type of surfing they enjoy and the qualities they look for in a good wave. Many, however, will agree that the length of a ride plays a key part. Anyone wanting to experience the longest possible wave should take a trip to Chicama. Upon approaching the sea, seemingly endless rows of waves line up. But just how far do these waves travel? Some carry surfers for an incredible two kilometres (1.2 miles). However, the most popular place to enter the sea is away from the beach. Due to the long paddling commute back to your starting point, boats can follow you in the water and then carry you back to the best place for the next wave.

82

THROW TOMATOES AT LA TOMATINA

Paint the town (and yourself) red by pelting tomatoes at your friends in Spain

On the last Wednesday of August every year, thousands of people head to a small town that lies 38 kilometres (24 miles) to the west of Valencia on the Spanish coast. The main square of the 9,000-person town of Buñol becomes packed with 20,000 locals and tourists, all with one thing in mind: tomatoes.

When the water cannon fires, around midday, the fight begins. Tomatoes brought in from Extremadura, a Spanish region bordering Portugal, are hurled in every direction by participants. The smart ones wear goggles – the last thing you want is acidic tomato juice in your

eyes, especially if you wear contact lenses. Old clothes are also a must; there's no way you'll be leaving the plaza in the same state you arrived. Many wear a swimsuit under their clothes, too, which isn't a bad idea considering there's a high chance of getting hit by a water hose.

Despite appearances, it isn't just a free-for-all – there are some rules to help control the chaos. No bottles or hard objects are allowed onto the plaza (only tomatoes can be thrown), and tomatoes need to be squashed before they're thrown to reduce the impact. Sensible footwear is essential, as well as a waterproof bag

for valuables like your phone. And as soon as the cannon fires at 1pm, all tomato throwing ceases.

La Tomatina has a strong tradition starting in the 1940s, but no one knows exactly why it started. It could have been a food fight among friends, an attack on a carnival parade, a practical joke on a bad musician... Regardless, today there are many travel agencies running packages that include spending the day at La Tomatina. Many of them are three-day packages based in Valencia with a day-trip to the fun at Buñol, but it's best to book at least a year in advance as many of them sell out.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Be sure to wear old clothes and keep important items like phones in waterproof bags.

Location:

Buñol, Spain

Time zone:

UTC +1

Best time to visit:

12-1pm on the last Wednesday of August.



Chaos reigns for a whole hour
at La Tomatina

83

SLEEP WITH THE FISHES

Spend the night in oceanic luxury in the world's first underwater bedroom

Don't panic, this epic adventure has nothing to do with the mafia. Your invitation to sleep with the fishes comes from the Conrad Maldives Rangali Island resort, which has opened an underwater suite in the clear blue waters of the Indian Ocean.

Guests pay a minimum of £7,700 (\$10,000) per night for the privilege of staying at The Muraka. Access to the holiday home is via a long wooden jetty that ensures privacy. The above-water level contains a kitchen, living area, gymnasium and three bedrooms. The infinity pool and

pristine décor make it a luxurious water villa by itself, but it's what lies beneath that makes The Muraka unique. Down a spiral staircase, below the waterline, is a master suite comprising a bedroom, lounge and bathroom with floor-to-ceiling windows for spectacular submarine views of fish and coral.

No expense was spared during The Muraka's construction – the whole thing cost around \$15 million. Similarly, no expense is spared to ensure that guests have everything they need during the stay. The daily service includes scuba-

diver cleaners scrubbing the windows of the submerged suite. A private chef and personal trainer are also on call, while Muraka residents have access to the villa's private boat and a seaplane transfer.

If The Muraka is out of your budget, the Rangali Island resort also boasts more conventional accommodation options with the ability to eat at Ithaa, an underwater restaurant. It still isn't cheap – expect to pay around £300 (\$400) for the dinner menu – but eating with the fishes is still a fraction of the price of sleeping with them.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Most Maldivian resorts prefer payment in US dollars, so try to remember to take a few (and the rest) with you.

Location:
Maldives

Time zone:
UTC+5

Best time to visit:
November to April to avoid monsoon season.



The underwater bedroom is encased by 18cm (7in) walls of reinforced acrylic

Conrad Maldives Rangali Island © Justin Nicholas

Not got a head for heights? Seeing the bridge from the ground is still an adventure!

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

BridgeClimb will provide most of the equipment – you just need good shoes and comfortable clothes.

Location:

Sydney, Australia

Time zone:

UTC+10



Best time to visit:

Avoid huge numbers of tourists and enjoy comfortable temperatures between March and May and September and November.

You'll need to climb 1,332 steps if you want to reach the summit



84

CLIMB SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE

It may be down under but you'll feel very much on top when you climb the coathanger

There's no doubting the splendour of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and walking along its 503-metre (1,650-foot) length is a real thrill. If you want to go a step further, however, then consider going up high. With the BridgeClimb tourist attraction, you can walk across the upper arch, heading from the southern end to the northern side and back again. And while you will have to pay for the experience, as long as you have a head for heights, it'll be worth every Australian cent.

The ability to climb the bridge was introduced in 1998 and, if you decide to embark on the adventure, you'll get the chance to see the stunning structure and its surroundings from

an entirely different perspective. It's a great way to get up close to this icon of Australia's most populated city – a structure based on the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle-upon-Tyne that was completed in 1932 after nine years' work. Since it's the largest steel arch of any bridge in the world, you'd be going as high as 134 metres (440 feet) above water level.

From up high, you'll be able to admire incredible views of the harbour, city, Blue Mountains and Pacific Ocean. You'll also have a choice of when you want to go up: whether at dawn, during the day, twilight or at night (all are stunning!). Each trip involves a small group of 14 people with expert guides taking you every step

of the way so you only need to wear the provided clothes and equipment and you'll soon be on your way!

To help you get the most out of this epic adventure, you should perhaps opt for the 3.5-hour tour which is the one that will take you all the way across the bridge. The cheaper three-hour option will get you to the summit before heading back and you can chop a little more time off if you decide to walk the lower rather than upper arch.

One package to bear in mind is Burrawa, which involves an indigenous guide. You will learn more about Aboriginal people and their landmarks. It's a very special experience indeed.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:
Be prepared for uncovered seating in the Florida sun – take suncream, water and a hat.

Location:
Florida, USA

Time zone:
UTC-5

Best time to visit:
Launches happen year-round but are less likely to be delayed in summer.

CURRENCY
\$
AMERICAN DOLLAR

On a clear day, rockets can be seen as far as Orlando and more than 120km (75mi) along the coast



85

WATCH A ROCKET LAUNCH

Feel the thrill of lift-off at the home of US space flight

Few humans are lucky enough to fly in space, but watching astronauts leave Earth is an epic adventure in itself. The east Florida coast from Titusville to Cocoa is a place of pilgrimage for space geeks eager to witness a rocket launch from Cape Canaveral or Kennedy Space Center.

The exact timing and location of launches depend on mission requirements and the weather, but a new mission typically lifts off every week or so. The majority are unmanned supply vehicles and rockets delivering new satellites into orbit, but even the smallest rocket launch is an impressive sight.

Kennedy Space Center offers the closest public viewing for daytime launches. Space centre staff provide expert commentary, and normal admission tickets are enough to see many launches, although special or crewed missions are likely to require an extra package and fee. To get even nearer to the lift-off location, the LC-39 observation gantry (close to where the Apollo astronauts launched for the Moon) is just 3.7 kilometres (2.3 miles) to the Atlas V launch pad. The engine sound reaches onlookers a little after lift-off since sound travels slower than light, but when it arrives the noise is terrific – as is the rumble that hits spectators right in the gut.

Night launches are perhaps even more spectacular as rocket engines light up the darkened sky. Kennedy Space Center will usually be closed, but there are plenty of other places to see rockets streak into the sky. Try Space View Park for an uninterrupted view of most launch pads and to see the US Space Walk of Fame while you wait. Cocoa Beach is out of the sight line of most launch pads but rockets become visible shortly after take-off. This is a fantastic point to see the curved trajectory as rockets go over the Atlantic. If you really want to push the boat out – literally – watch from aboard a craft in the ocean, just south of the exclusion zone.

© Getty

86

JUMP OFF A CLIFF

Make a splash at Rick's Cafe in Negril, Jamaica

How would you like to have your adventure with a side of buffalo wings? Established in 1974, and set into some seriously commanding Jamaican cliffs, Rick's Cafe invites visitors to eat, sip, chill... and jump 11 metres (36 feet) to join the schools of tiny fish swimming below. As you plunge under the clear, turquoise water, your world will go quiet – time momentarily standing still – before your head punches through the surface and you hear a cheering crowd, fuelled by the joy of watching

you jump and, quite possibly, a few Mai Tais. Indeed, Rick's Cafe will provide the perfect combination of rum and fun. There are lower areas to leap from, too, if you want to work up to 'the big one'. Brave/crazy locals frequently climb to the top of a tree and hurl themselves into the Caribbean Sea from there. Brides have also leapt into the cove during their 'trash the dress' photoshoot. Splash!

Perhaps just as thrilling as the cliff jumping at this iconic spot are the sunsets. Famed for being

the best place in Jamaica to watch the sun go down, Negril's sky catches fire every night with an extraordinary bright-orange hue, created by salt particles floating in the air over the sea. As the evening starts to draw in, make sure you secure the best seat in the house on the upper terrace at Rick's, at the edge of the clifftop. Watching the sun turn in for the night, listening to chilled reggae tunes, sundowner in hand – with memories of diving from the cliffs earlier in the day – is definitely one for the bucket list.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Unless you're a pro, jump feet first to avoid hurting yourself or performing a belly flop.

Location:

Negril, Jamaica

Time zone:

UTC -5

Best time to visit:

December to April for warm weather and low rainfall.



Take a leap of faith... into the turquoise Jamaican waters

87

RIDE AN OLYMPIC BOBSLED

Follow the sled tracks of Olympians at Team USA's training base

Bobsleigh is one of the iconic events in winter sports and it's easy to see why – a team of competitors charging down an ice track in a rocket-like contraption is hard to ignore. The rules are simple: whoever gets to the bottom in the quickest time wins. Germany won the gold medal in the four-man bobsleigh at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City; their four runs added up to an aggregate 3:07.51, three-tenths of a second quicker than Team USA. Now you have the chance to time yourself on the same ice.

Bobsleigh is a hardcore sport. It requires explosive speed to push the sled off and agility to jump inside. After that, it's heads down as you plunge to the bottom, experiencing four times the force of gravity during the minute-long ride. Of course, somebody needs to drive the thing, but unless you have years of training, your ride down the Olympic course will be guided by a professional pilot and you'll benefit from somebody else pushing off. Nevertheless, the pilot will also give you a detailed briefing

encompassing how to board the sled, how to position your body and how to hold your head in the best position.

The pilots stay busy during the warm summer months, when the Olympic Park is busy with visitors enjoying ziplines, high ropes and tubing. The concrete track, now free of ice, plays host to modified bobsleds on wheels that are used by tourists and Team USA's trainee Olympians. The adrenaline rush is just as impressive and your neck will be just as stiff afterwards.

“Bobsleigh is a hardcore sport. It requires explosive speed to push the sled off and agility to jump inside”

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

If you haven't already got one, try to get hold of an action camera for a memento of your run.

Location:

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Time zone:

UTC -6

Best time to visit:

January to March for guaranteed ice and snow.



Bobsleds reach 130kph (80mph) as they hit turn 12

© Getty

A person wearing a helmet and racing gear is riding a red and black quad bike across sand dunes. The bike is kicking up a cloud of sand. The background is a clear blue sky.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:
With quad biking, there's a lot of torque but not much in the way of weight distribution. So if you're going fast, try to avoid 'two wheeling' the vehicle, otherwise you'll be in trouble.

Location:
Morocco

Time zone:
UTC +1

Best time to visit:
September to November, to avoid the scorching heat.

CURRENCY
د.م.
MOROCCAN DIRHAM

The way that sand gives in to the power of the quad bike is a truly thrilling feeling

88 RACE QUADS ACROSS THE DESERT

Sand in the air, the roar of the engine, and the beauty of nothing for miles around...

Morocco is famed for its vast deserts and is one of the countries that arguably the most iconic desert in the world – the Sahara – spans. It's perhaps no surprise to learn that the country offers a number of ways to explore its various barren yet uniquely fascinating deserts. For most, that will likely mean camels, the go-to Moroccan mode of transport for navigating sand dunes. But why not trade four legs for four wheels?

Quad bikes are particularly fun vehicles for tours: they're open-air, they feel unsafe, they're capable of great speeds, and yet when handled properly a quad bike is actually a fairly flawless

means of transport. And their heavy torque and thick, sand-smashing wheels help get you around places that might otherwise be a struggle. Tall sand dunes, for example, are notoriously tough to climb, whether on foot or in an ordinary vehicle.

But riding these things around a Moroccan desert is particularly interesting for the scale that is on offer. Many tour guides will start you out on flatland by the sea, giving you a chance to 'open'er up' to feel the wind in your hair and to satiate that latent need for speed. After that, you'll face mountains of sand, with near-vertical (or so it'll feel) climbs to the top and an exhilarating race to the bottom. The forgiving nature of sand means

you'll have plenty of reasons to fly over the tippy-top of each new sand dune you climb, while the inherent beauty in the surrounding environment will only add to the sense of an epic adventure.

Of course, you could potentially seek out a quad-biking desert experience in any of the planet's desertscapes, but with a host of tours available directly from Marrakech – which is itself located relatively near to a broad number of travellers – it's easy to see why the area remains so popular for this particular sort of thrill. Add in the fact that you can find a reputed tour for as little as £40 (\$47), and it's easy to see why it's a must-do in Morocco.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Make sure that you take plenty of cash, because not everywhere accepts cards yet.

Location:

Norway

Time zone:

UTC +1

Best time to visit:

From May to July visitors can enjoy the best weather and the midnight sun.



With more than 1,000 fjords, Norway gives travellers plenty of choice for viewing these stunning vistas

89

SAIL THE FJORDS OF NORWAY

The only way to experience Norway's fabled fjords is the Viking way: by sea

Brutally forged over millions of years, Norway's fjords (there are more than 1,000 of them) were carved out of the earth by colossal glaciers over numerous ice ages. As innumerable as they are insurmountable, they comprise narrow bodies of deep water, enveloped in steep land. Today, the UNESCO World Heritage sites offer intrepid explorers an unrivalled first-hand experience of the awe-inspiring power of Mother Nature. And there's no better way to navigate than in the shadow of the Vikings: by sea.

One of the most popular operators is the storied Hurtigruten, which has sailed the 34 ports between Kirkenes and Bergen since 1893. Today, a one-way trip between the two spans six days and costs around £950 (\$1,120). However, there's a wide variety of cruises on

offer, including some that link up with the Flåm Railway, one of the world's steepest railways. The route takes travellers along some of the Norwegian coast's most scenic landmarks, such as Senja, the Vesterålen archipelago, the Lofoten Islands, and the Helgeland Coast – accompanied by Arctic birds and whales.

Among the most coveted fjords to visit is Lysefjord, the country's southernmost, which carves its way 40 kilometres (25 miles) inland, with mountains rising 304 metres (1,000 feet) high. The fjord is home to Preikestolen, or Pulpit Rock, which hikers can reach through various routes – including a two-hour climb up 4,444 wooden steps.

Meanwhile, Norway's second-longest fjord, Hardangerfjord, stretches 174 kilometres (108 miles) inland from the Atlantic Ocean. Famed for

its apple trees, glaciers and orchards, the region is littered with quaint villages and fruit farms, lining the way towards Vøringsfossen, Norway's largest waterfall.

Further afield, ambitious hikers can drag themselves from the village of Skjeggedal, up 1,000 metres (3,280 feet) towards Trolltunga, or Troll's Tongue – a journey that spans 27 kilometres (17 miles) and 12 hours. Although the route is exhausting, the views overlooking the Ringedalsvatnet, ringed by snow-capped peaks, are a sight to behold.

Nestled between two of the most iconic fjords, no Norwegian tour is complete without a visit to Bergen – the country's culinary capital. The city even hosts food tours, treating hungry travellers to a marathon through some of Norway's finest restaurants. Remember to take baggy clothes!

90

TRAVEL THE SILK ROAD

Journey through Asia and the Mediterranean to uncover this network of ancient trade routes

If you're passionate about travel and history, then journeying along the Silk Road is an epic adventure for you. The Silk Road is a network of ancient land and maritime trade routes that connected the east to the west, bridging the gap between civilisations around the world. This ultimately led to the dissemination of beliefs and ideas, influencing the cultural, political and economic development of civilisations located along the Silk Road.

The effect of this can still be seen today, with beautiful cities and diverse cultures to explore across the Silk Road, which stretches all the

way from East Asia to the Mediterranean and goes through various countries. The Silk Road has many different sights to offer, from the mountains and lakes in Kazakhstan and Georgia, to the deserts of Uzbekistan and Iran. There are also numerous stunning architectural gems to see, including the renowned Islamic architecture in the city of Samarkand. It goes without saying that there is guaranteed to be something to pique the interest of pretty much every traveller along the Silk Road.

There are many ways to explore these vast trade routes, whether you want to visit one part

of the Silk Road, such as Central Asia, or cover as much of it as possible. If the prospect of planning your own trip through the Silk Road seems daunting, there are a few companies offering tour packages to take away the hassle for you. One thing you must do, though, is be aware of and respect different cultures as you're travelling. For example, women need to cover their hair in Iran.

Travelling the Silk Road is the perfect adventure for the traveller who does not care for luxury, but wants to immerse themselves in the life, culture and cuisine of other countries, and experience a trip like no other.

The Almaty mountains and nomadic tents in Kazakhstan

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Be sure to pack dust protection, loose clothing and other items suitable for desert climates.



Location:

Various, including China, Uzbekistan and Iran



Time zone:

Various

Best time to visit:

Spring and autumn months, for moderate temperatures.



91 SWIM WITH TURTLES

If it's your dream to swim with these charismatic creatures, here are some of the top spots

BORNEO

While you may know Borneo for its orangutans, it's also home to some of the best dive locations in the world, including the Sipadan and Lankayan islands. With more than 3,000 species of fish, you'll swim through colourful shoals off Sipadan Island, but the best part is you can dive with 20 to 30 turtles at once. Plus you can visit the infamous turtle tomb – a turtle graveyard. Lankayan Island is quieter and this marine protected 'turtle corridor' is just as beautiful if you're looking to flip your fins alongside green and hawksbill turtles, as this is a key nesting site. A one-day dive costs around £150 (\$170).



AUSTRALIA

Where better to get up close with sea turtles in the wild than the world's largest coral reef? As one of the seven natural wonders of the world, it's no surprise that more than two million people visit the Great Barrier Reef each year. With its warm tropical waters, colourful corals and more than 1,500 species of fish, this marine playground is a must-visit. Plus, you can see six of the seven species of sea turtle here, including the green turtle, loggerhead, leatherback, olive ridley, hawksbill and flatback. In fact, it's the only place to see flatbacks in the wild.

If you're looking for somewhere less crowded, the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Marine Park, Lady Elliot Island and the Cook Islands are all stunning areas to swim with these ancient reptiles. A snorkelling tour in the Great Barrier Reef can cost from £100 (\$110) or more.



GENTLE GIANTS

Sea turtles are shy and solitary creatures, so if you're hoping for a close encounter you'll need to be respectful of their space. Make sure you're wearing reef-safe sunscreen, don't touch or take anything from the ocean, and approach turtles from the side. Don't chase them or they will swim away.

HAWAII

Pristine beaches, untouched rainforests and glowing volcanoes. Hawaii is famous for its natural beauty and aloha spirit, making it an ideal location to spot sea turtles. The islands are home to five of the seven species, including hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley and the most common green turtle. These shelled beauties can be seen year-round, whether they're munching on algae in the shallows, swimming on the ocean floor or surfacing for air. There are good spots to swim with them on every island, but Maluaka Beach or 'turtle town' as it is known on Maui, and Laniakea Beach and Hanauma Bay on Oahu are top choices for visitors. Snorkelling with a guide in Maui can cost upwards of £80 (\$90).



92

DISCOVER A LOST CITY

Ciudad Perdida is Colombia's answer to Machu Picchu – but with a fraction of the visitors

It's no secret that Latin America boasts some of the world's best ancient ruins. One gem that often gets overlooked, though, is the aptly named Ciudad Perdida ('Lost City'), aka Teyuna, nestled in the jungle-draped Sierra Nevada mountains of northern Colombia. Thought to have been deserted in the 16th century, it was only 'rediscovered' in the 1970s (though, of course, locals knew it was there all along).

You have to visit the site with an approved guided tour company (most are based in nearby Santa Marta); expect to pay around £265 (\$320) per person. Trips can be tailored to fitness and preferred pace, from three days up to six.

All round, the trek covers some 45 kilometres (26 miles) and tops out at a relatively meagre 1,200 metres (3,900 feet). Even seasoned hikers

shouldn't take these low numbers for granted, though. There are steep sections, often on loose rock or slippery mud, so take sturdy, comfortable footwear. Also pack plenty of fresh clothes, as you have to cross the Buritaca River several times. Perhaps most challenging of all, though, is the energy-sapping humidity. Here, slow and steady isn't a cliché – it's essential.

Draining as the ascent is, the benefits of such a remote destination abound. En route, you're immersed in nature, with the chance to see monkeys, poison-dart frogs, butterflies, parrots and more. Their soundtrack will lullaby you to sleep and wake you at dawn.

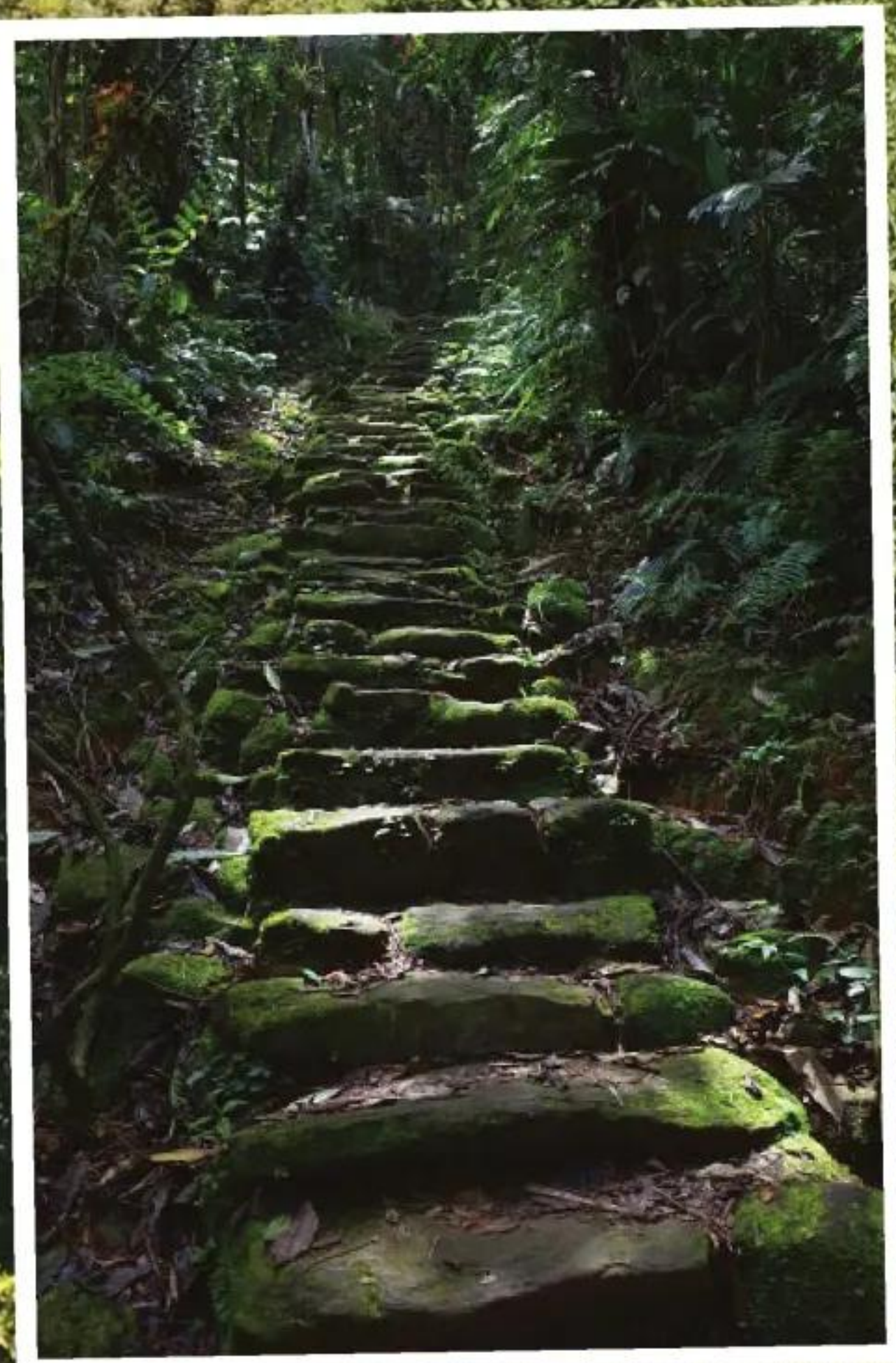
While animal encounters are down to luck, you're guaranteed to meet some of the descendants of Teyuna's early inhabitants that

still live here. Most are happy to tell you about their homeland's 1,200-year history, but be sensitive around Colombia's troubled past.

As you near the summit, tell-tale hints of ancient civilization emerge amid the greenery, culminating in a stone staircase disappearing into the forest that feels like it may never end...

Finally emerging above the jungle canopy, you're greeted by a wave of fresh air and an unforgettable glimpse of what was once the crowning glory of this 'city in the sky'. As you explore the snaking pathways and stepped terraces of Ciudad Perdida, part of you can't help but feel sad that these Indiana Jones-worthy ruins are so overshadowed by the Machu Picchus of this world. But then another part of you can't help but also feel a little pleased.

“As you near the summit, tell-tale hints of ancient civilization begin to emerge”



The final hurdle before you reach the city proper is a staircase of some 1,200 stone steps

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Pack a torch for night-time bathroom trips as lighting is limited at the camps, and snakes and creepy crawlies such as tarantulas are common.

Location:

Tayrona National Park,
Magdalena, Colombia

Time zone:

UTC -5

Best time to visit:

Accessible year round, but the dry season
(December to March) is easier going.





ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Padding, padding, padding. A padded seat, padded shorts, Vaseline and comfy shoes will be your best friends and will help you to enjoy that evening glass of wine.

Location:

France

Time zone:

UTC+1



Best time to visit:

June or August – beat the rush or enjoy a leisurely cycle without worrying that 200 competitors are chasing you down.

Now we definitely don't condone drinking and cycling but... champagne on the Champs-Élysées sounds pretty good



93

CYCLE THE TOUR DE FRANCE

Take on the world's most gruelling two-wheeled challenge through France's most picturesque terrain

Every July, hundreds of toned, ultra-competitive, Lycra-clad athletes line up in France on the start line of the most physically demanding cycling race on the planet – the Tour de France. The three-week-long race culminates in one of the most iconic finishes of any event in the world, riders cruising down the Champs-Élysées, champagne in hand. What could be more French?

Most of us will never be part of that throng, jostling in the peloton, leading a breakaway or bursting clear in a sprint finish to take a stage

win. But you can do the next best thing. Roads are closed, bunting laid out and water stations set up along the route for the professionals, but there is nothing stopping anyone tracing that route and doing it themselves either before or after the competitors.

The key to cycling the Tour de France route yourself is preparation, planning and an understanding of your limits. Even the strongest Le Tour champions sometimes come unstuck on a brutal mountain stage, so it's essential that you train your body and mind, making sure that

you're not putting yourself in danger. The route is usually released in October, so study it carefully, paying attention to gradients (both up and down), mountainous stages and long rural stretches. You don't want a flat tyre or pulled muscle in the middle of nowhere.

Novice cyclists should limit themselves to a few stages, while seasoned pedallers can test themselves with more of the 21 stages. Convince a team to join you, making it a sociable, safe adventure where you can benefit from the shared experience and the wind resistance reduction



94

ZIPLINE OVER NIAGARA FALLS

A view like no other of the world's most iconic waterfalls

The range of gushing water that separates the Canadian edge of Ontario and the north border of New York in the US is, even by itself, the sort of bucket-list feature that most will want to get around to seeing at some point. There's likely not a person alive who visited Niagara Falls and was unmoved at witnessing the sheer power of nature on display. Whether it's wandering the overlooking platforms or getting drenched lower down, it's a must-see tourist spot that will forever remain popular.

But you may well think that it's all a little passé to simply gaze upon the mighty Falls. As its popularity as a tourist attraction has grown over the years (reaching well over eight million visitors each year!), the variety and breadth of the ways to experience the natural wonder have also grown and expanded. Whether it's boat rides and history, culinary delights or a round of golf, it's a surprisingly jam-packed tourist destination these days. Those looking for a little more thrill among the white waters of the Niagara Falls, however,

will want to consider the ziplining routes that are on offer.

The main attraction here is the 'Zipline to the Falls', which will send you right past the American Falls before touching down at the star of the show, the Horseshoe Falls. It's definitely a unique way to experience the glorious views on offer, and certainly quicker than it would be for those on the ground who decide to walk to the main waterfall viewing platform. It's perhaps not the most white-knuckle zipline experience you might find in the world, but for the sheer spectacle of nature on show (not to mention views of Toronto's skyline and its Skylon Tower), there aren't many that can offer this level of spectacle while you're gliding through the air.

It's worth pointing out that there is also a zipline adventure course, but while this is definitely a destination you won't forget scrambling around several feet in the air, there are probably better and more fulfilling ways to spend your day at Niagara Falls

that comes from group cycling. Train until you're confident that you can complete each day's cycle. Most importantly, make time to actually enjoy your journey. The cycle will be stunning, through some of the most incredible countryside and jaw-dropping mountains you're ever likely to see, but also make sure you take some time out of the saddle to explore the fine food, drink and culture France has to offer.

You might not end your trip with the yellow jersey, but your friends will be green with envy at your magical Le Tour adventure.

Right © Getty



The zipline will take you right past the American Falls, offering a totally different perspective

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Remember that the Niagara Falls straddle the US/Canadian border, so you will need to take travel documents with you when visiting.

Location:

Toronto, Canada

Time zone:

UTC-4

Best time to visit:

Summer



95

HUNT GHOSTS

Discover what goes bump in the night in a spooky spectral search



EYES WIDE OPEN

Most ghost tours and investigations last into the early hours, or even through the night. Make sure you're on top form by getting a decent sleep the night before or having a nap so that you're not struggling to stay awake.

Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum, USA

Although a modern approach to mental health care when it first opened in 1864, the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in West Virginia soon descended into squalor and ended up with 2,400 patients in a space designed for 250. Patients were restrained and put through electroshock therapy and lobotomies. Hundreds died, many of whom supposedly still roam the halls, and wannabe ghostbusters can spot them during an overnight hunt. So large is the complex that tours only focus on a specific part and are led by knowledgeable guides, although ghost hunters are given time to explore on their own – that is if they dare.



Jamaica Inn, UK

The spectres that prowl the famous coaching inn and smugglers' haunt on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall are a noisy bunch. Staff and customers have heard conversations in a foreign tongue, footsteps in the night and horse hooves on the courtyard cobbles. Investigate the ghoulies at one of the fortnightly paranormal investigation evenings. Staying overnight is recommended since the festivities finish in the early hours, although whether you choose to stay in room five depends on how brave you are: the ghost of a young girl leaves wet footprints, appears by the side of the bed and even touches guests.

Hoia Bacin Forest, ROMANIA

Who needs Dracula? This eerie Transylvanian woodland would be terrifying even if Bram Stoker's horror icon didn't live nearby. Visit in winter, when the bare, crooked trees are surrounded by early-morning mist, and it's easy to believe the paranormal stories of the forest: the shepherd and 200 sheep who disappeared, the girl who went missing and reappeared five years later without aging a day, the woman who turned up with a 15th-century coin in her pocket... The forest is undoubtedly creepy, and senses are heightened with the knowledge that a brown bear might stumble across your path.





It's not advised to leave your tent to go stumbling around for somewhere to go to the toilet

96

VISIT THE GATEWAY TO HELL

Take a trip to the fiery pits of Turkmenistan

Generally speaking, Hell is the kind of place that people generally try to avoid if at all possible. However, the so-called Gateway to Hell in Turkmenistan is one place that thrill-seekers should definitely try to see. At 70 metres (230 feet) wide and 20 metres (65 feet) deep, the Darvaza gas crater is a sink hole that was accidentally created in 1971 in the Turkmenistani desert (although there are debates as to whether it was formed in the 1960s), allowing trapped underground methane to start escaping. Officials set the crater on fire, expecting it to burn out relatively quickly. They probably didn't expect it to still be ablaze decades later! It is a simply incredible sight,

seeing pools of fire endlessly crackling away, a recreation of the foothills of Middle Earth's Mount Doom right in front of you. It probably won't surprise you to discover that this inferno isn't near a major city, so part of the fun is getting there. Two buses make the trip out from the capital Ashgabat each morning, dropping you in Darvaza village where you can walk or take a taxi to the crater. The three-hour journey may not be for the faint-hearted, but it is one way to experience Turkmenistan's Karakum Desert. Once there you can marvel at the unique sight of the crater in all its fiery glory, getting close enough to the flames to toast a marshmallow from the heat, before camping

overnight at the crater edge (although homestays in the village are also an option). Camping will enable you to enjoy the crater at night when it's at its most spectacular. This truly is an experience you'll want to rush to for three reasons. Firstly, scientists have no idea how long it'll keep burning for. It could go for another 50 years, it could be out within the year. Secondly, the president of Turkmenistan wants it to be doused, saying it's wasting precious gas resources. But thirdly, and most importantly, it's simply an incredible experience – from the journey, to the half-century-old fiery crater, to the desert campsite. Hopefully, if you behave, this will be the only time you see the Gateway to Hell.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Nights can be chilly when sleeping outside, so don't forget to pack a jumper or two. ➔

Location:

NamibRand Nature Reserve, Namibia

Time zone:

UTC +2

Best time to visit:

June to September for the dry season and clear skies.



NamibRand boasts spectacular views of galaxies that the northern hemisphere never sees

97

SLEEP UNDER THE STARS

Gaze into the heart of the cosmos in the pristine darkness of southwest Namibia

Aside from enjoying opportunities to spot cheetahs, leopards and zebra during the day, tourists visit NamibRand Nature Reserve – nestled between Namib-Naukluft National Park and the Nubib Mountains – to take advantage of its spectacular views at night. NamibRand is one of the few places in the world granted a top rating by the International Dark-Sky Association. Namibia's dry climate almost guarantees a cloudless sky, and there is little smog since the population is spread out, with only around 2.6 million people living inside the boundaries of the world's 34th largest country.

NamibRand's location away from light-polluting settlements enables the stars to shine brighter, and the reserve has strict rules on the type of artificial lights that can be used. Resorts are limited to no more than 25 beds and there is an upper limit across the entire reserve.

Sossusvlei Desert Lodge has its own observatory with a resident astronomer to point out the highlights of the night sky, including the Southern Cross, Orion's Belt, the Jewel Box cluster and Omega Centauri. Ten luxurious lodges surround the observatory, each with a telescope on the terrace and a skylight over the bed. The

lodges at Kwessi Dunes Camp have outdoor sleeping decks featuring four-poster beds with netting to keep away troublesome flies and mosquitos. Nothing will make you feel as small as lying in bed while staring into the heart of the Milky Way and the Magellanic Clouds.

Stargazers with Tok Tokkie Trails go without the lodges completely. Instead, the two-day walking safaris have adventurers sleeping overnight on stretcher beds in the middle of the NamibRand. Guests can rest their weary feet with unsurpassed views of the cosmos accompanied by the earthly sounds of geckos and owls.

98

SWIM WITH CROCODILES

Dare you come face to face with one of the most fearsome predators on Earth?

They call it the Cage of Death and you may be wondering just what you've signed yourself up to. But while there is plenty of exhilaration and your nerves are set to be put on edge, in truth, you're not actually going to be in much danger when you decide to swim with a large saltwater crocodile.

Just as well, too, otherwise this amazing adventure in Darwin, Australia, would rapidly run out of people willing to plunge beneath the water to see the crocs up close. It's part of the attractions at Crocosaurus Cove, which brings

together some of the largest saltwater reptiles in Australia and it's something all adventure seekers should consider.

All in all, you'll get to spend 15 minutes in the water with a crocodile capable of chomping down with a bite force of three tons. You'll also get to see such ferocious power in action as the trained handlers will regularly feed the croc throughout your session – there will be plenty to take in, that's for sure!

Don't worry about a crocodile being overfed, though, because five of them are used for this

attraction in total and there are just 11 sessions throughout the day. You can choose to go in the water alone or with a friend, and you can also embark on a VIP experience if you wish, where you get to learn how to feed a croc for yourself while becoming acquainted with a baby one.

There's also a similar experience at CrocArena, which is part of Wildlife Habitat in Port Douglas in the far north of Queensland, Australia. There you get to swim with two crocodiles as part of the Swim With the Salties experience, benefitting from a 180-degree clear underwater view.

“Trained handlers will regularly feed the croc throughout your session”

You can see lots of other crocs at Crocosaurus Cove



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Take an underwater camera with you – you'll be able to snap some amazing shots.

Location:

Darwin, Australia

Time zone:

UTC +9.30

Best time to visit:

You may as well combine your trip with a wider adventure: see Darwin at its best between May and October.



You get to enjoy 360-degree views thanks to the transparent glass tube at Crocosaurus Cove



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

In the days and even hours leading up to your trip, check the official website for the latest safety information and road closures.

Location:

Montana, USA

Time zone:

UTC -7

Best time to visit:

July to September to have the best chance of driving the Going-to-the-Sun Road after it's been cleared of snow.



You like glaciers, lakes, mountains and wildlife? Glacier National Park has you covered

99

DRIVE THE GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Catch one of North America's most incredible sights while you still can

Many of the epic adventures in this bookazine are once-in-a-lifetime trips. Not many of them are only-in-our-lifetime trips, but there is a real risk that a drive through Montana's Glacier National Park is one of them. The park, which was first established in 1910, is a 4,100-square-kilometre (1,500-square-mile) oasis of beauty, stretching through northern Montana to the Canadian border. It is home to 26 glaciers, 175 mountains, 762 lakes and one iconic road. That highway is the amazingly named Going-to-the-Sun Road, an 80-kilometre (50-mile) arrow through the very heart of the park, which allows you to barrel east to west (or vice versa) along every conceivable cold-weather

vista. It offers you absolutely incredible sights of the park's stunning glaciers, forests and alpine tundra from up to 2,025 metres (6,646 feet) above sea level.

While visitors have to stick to the limited roads within the park, it's still advised that you have a pretty hardy vehicle and snow chains to account for any sudden changes in the weather and road conditions. A seven-day vehicle pass starts at £20 (\$25) and you'll need to make a reservation to travel the Going-to-the-Sun Road so you may want to do it over the course of a few days to ensure you get your money's worth. But even if you only manage to spend a day there, it's bound to be worth it for the simply breathtaking

scenery on offer as ice giants rise up around you and your passengers.

However, you may need to get there soon. The glaciers after which the park is named are shrinking at an alarming rate, with some losing 80% of their mass over the past 55 years. There had been concerns that Blackfoot and Jackson Glaciers, two of the largest in the park, could be gone by 2020. That didn't end up happening, but it's still a stark reminder that climate change could cost us some of our most stunning and jaw-dropping natural wonders. Driving the Glacier National Park is a truly unique experience. Let's make sure it's one that our children and their children can enjoy as well.

100 SLEEP AMONG THE TREES

You won't 'be-leaf' how fun it is to rest your adventurous bones in a treehouse

Imagine waking up in the morning and being among nature. Now imagine looking down from your place of rest and remembering that you're up to 19 metres (62 feet) in the air. That's the pleasure to be had when you sleep high in the trees at the Domaine des Ormes wooded parkland in Brittany, France. And with some family-friendly options, this is an epic adventure that can be enjoyed by all ages.

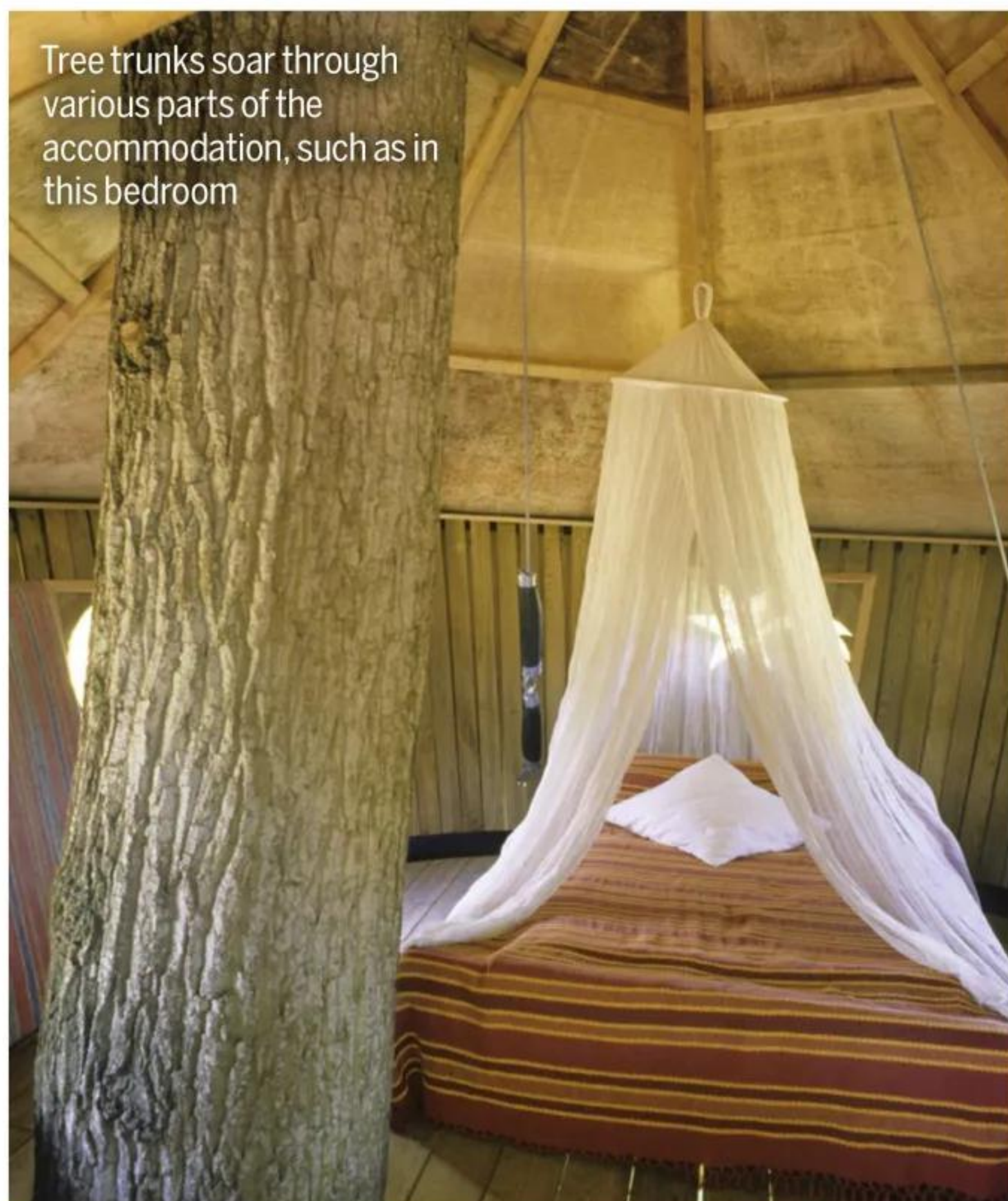
Visitors have various options. You can choose a ladder treehouse that takes five minutes to climb and is big enough for two or three people to stay in. These can be as low as eight metres (26 feet) off the ground and as high as 19 metres (62 feet).

You can also opt for zipwire treehouses, all of which are 13 metres (43 feet) high. Reaching these is a true adventure in itself, requiring you to traverse a single ropes course (one that requires you to receive some training beforehand). Aside from ensuring you'll have earned your rest by the time you get to your accommodation, these trips make the experience of making your way into the trees feel authentic.

Yet if you'd prefer an easier time of it, simply go for the family treehouses. You still get wonderful views that put you up to nine metres (30 feet) off the ground, but you reach them via a spiral staircase. They also come with protective netting in case you have curious young people around.

In all cases, your treehouse will come with many home comforts and you'll also get to enjoy the surrounding site with its indoor swimming pools, mini-golf, playgrounds, water slides and more. Indeed, there are loads of mini adventures on offer here from archery to horse and pony riding. You'll be dizzy with excitement!

Tree trunks soar through various parts of the accommodation, such as in this bedroom



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

Take time to explore the local area, especially the wonderful Grand Aquarium at Saint-Malo.

Location:

Brittany, France

Time zone:

UTC +1



Best time to visit:

Go for the warmest, least-wet time of the year: between June and August.

There's an apt rustic feel to some of the treehouse accommodation



101

SEARCH FOR ORANGUTANS IN BORNEO

Come face to face with one of humanity's closest cousins



Kinabatangan River

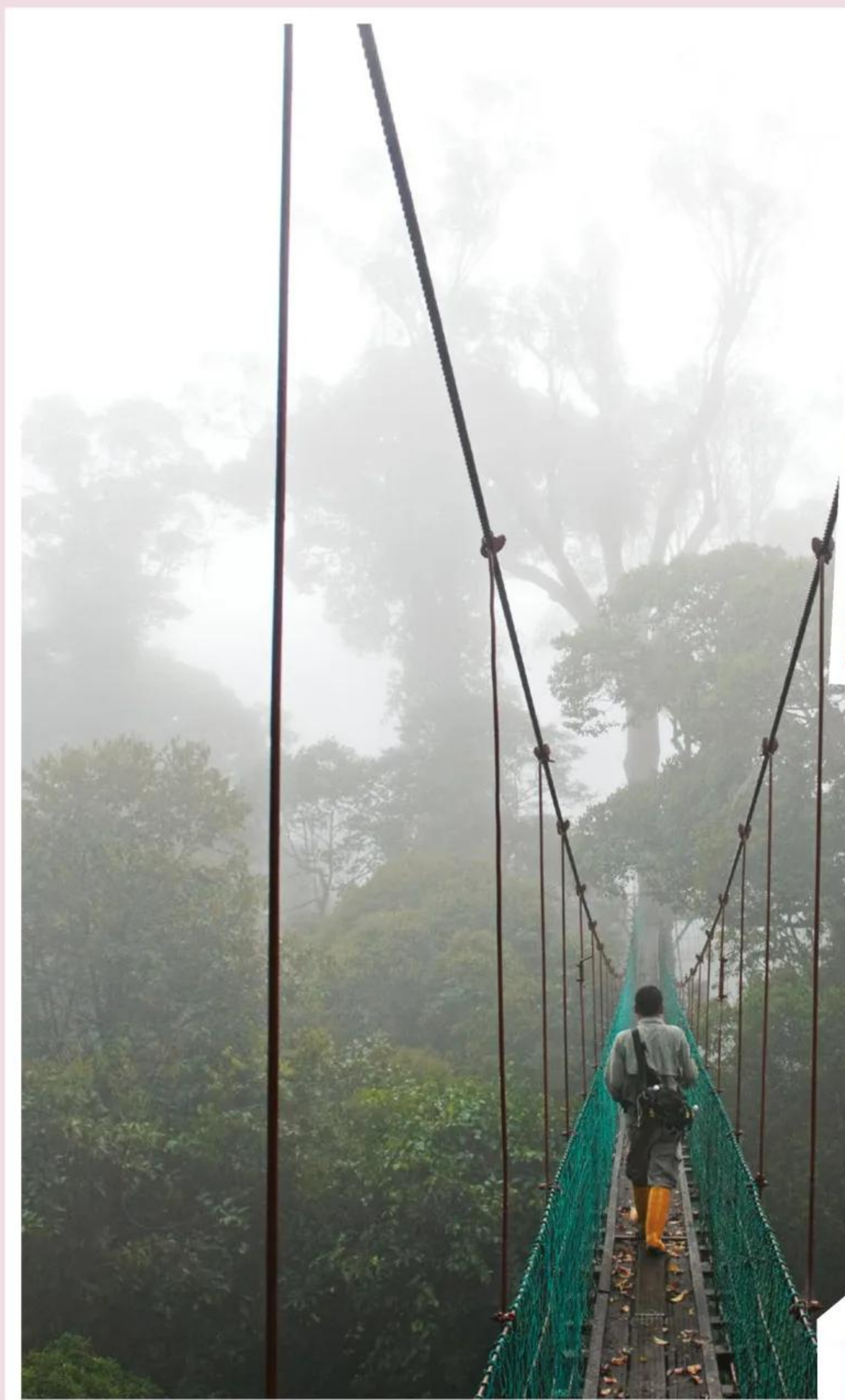
Want to meet the real-life jungle ape that inspired Disney's King Louie? Whether you have kids, aren't super fit or just aren't keen on trekking through the forest, the Kinabatangan River is one of the best places for an all-but-guaranteed sighting of orangutans in Borneo. Sit back and relax as your boat journeys down the longest river in Sabah, taking in the lush, green rainforest and the sounds of birdlife. You'll not only see these majestic apes swinging through the trees, but pygmy elephants and proboscis monkeys are likely sightings too in this wildlife haven. A three-day tour at a budget lodge is around £190-£230 (\$215-\$260).

Bottom right © Alamy. All other images © Getty

Danum Valley

Danum Valley Conservation Area may not provide a guaranteed viewing of the orangutan (Malay for 'people of the forest'), but this 130-million-year-old forest is worth a look regardless. Plus, with around 500 orangutans living there, your chances are still quite high and if you do see one, it makes it all the more special. While you can explore this unspoiled national park on foot via a number of nature trails or in a safari vehicle, the 300-metre (985-foot) long, 27-metre (89-foot) high suspended canopy walkway offers the best view – and an amazing experience in itself. A three-day tour with a stay at the Field Centre is around £320-380 (\$360-430).

“If you're lucky enough to spot an orangutan, it'll steal your heart”



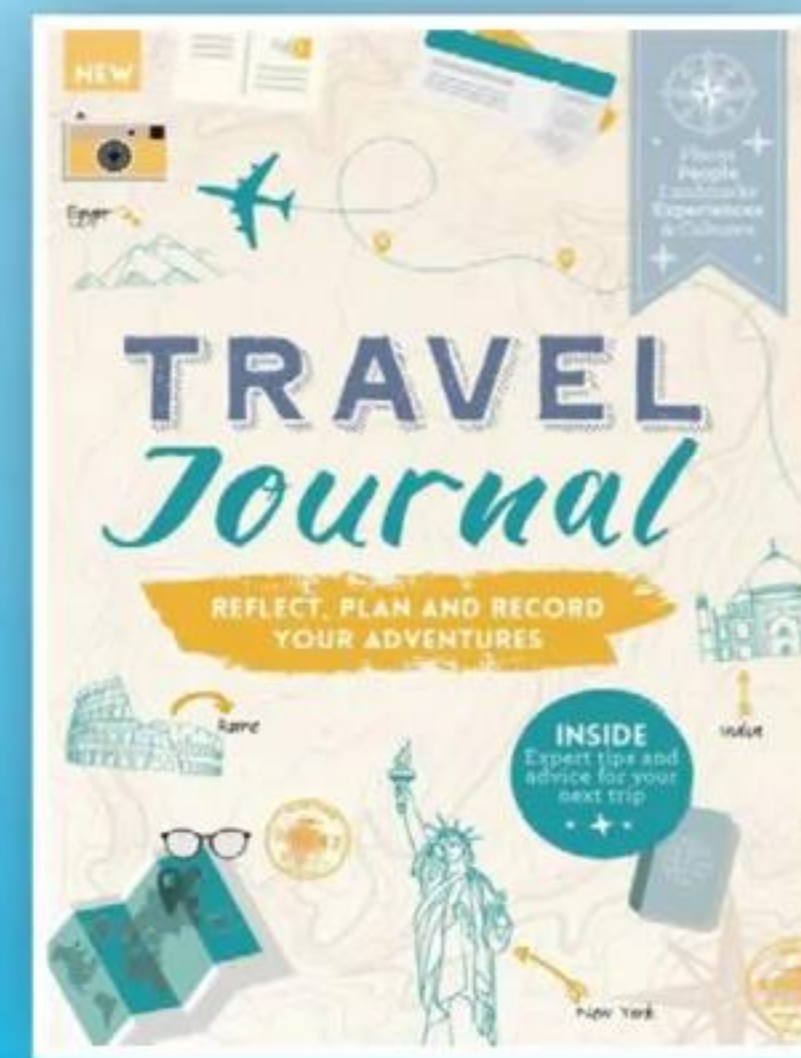
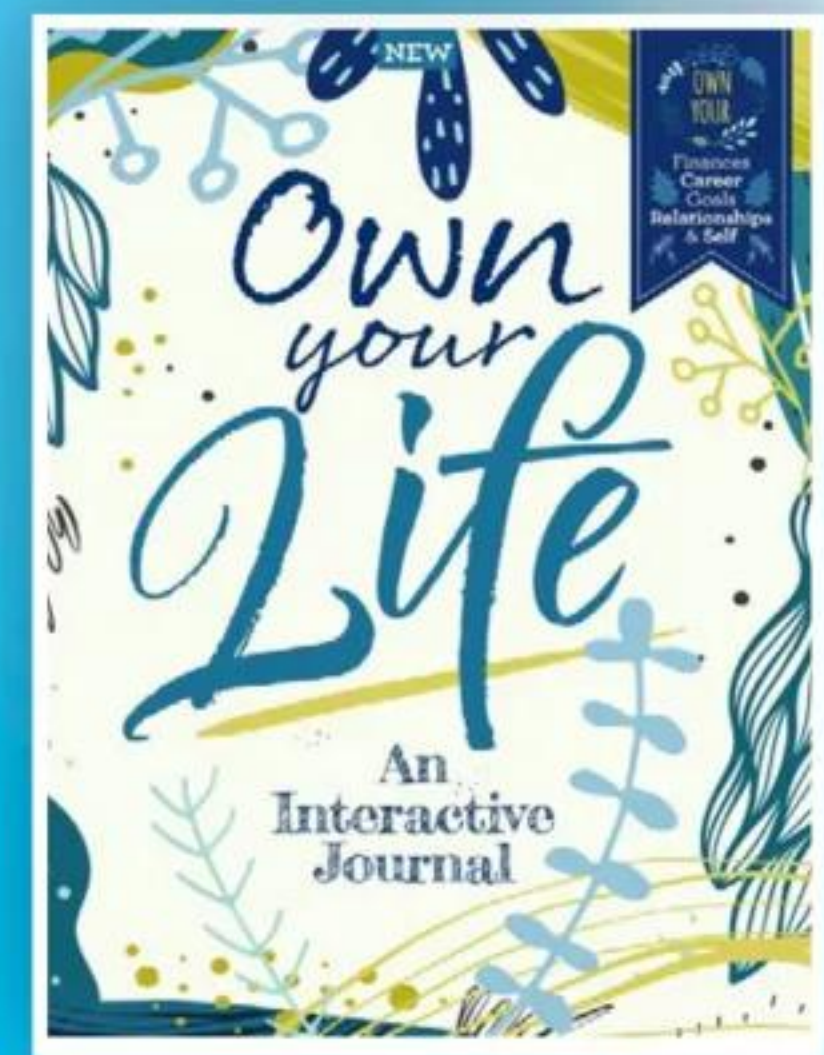
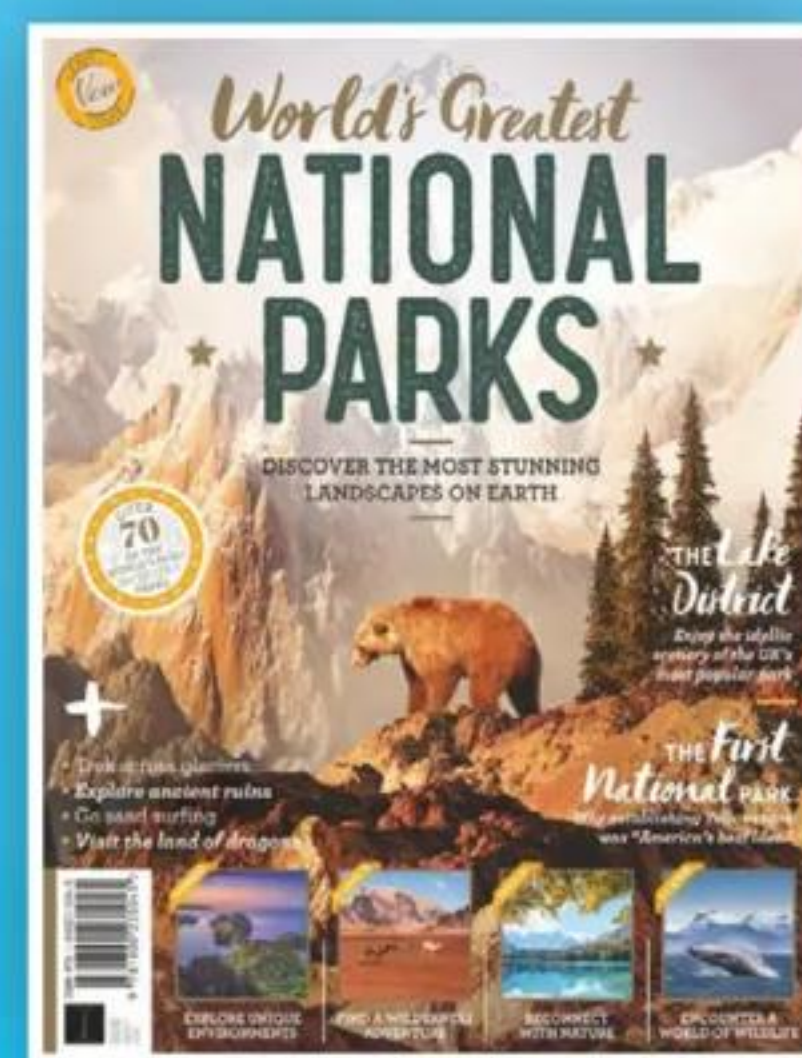
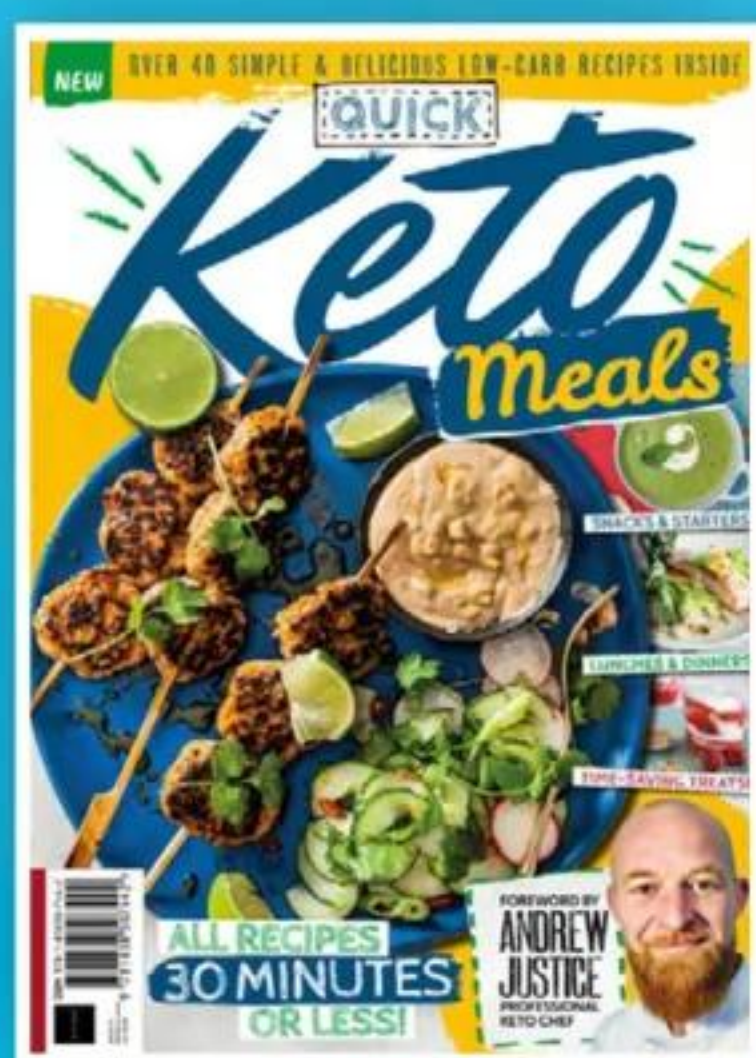
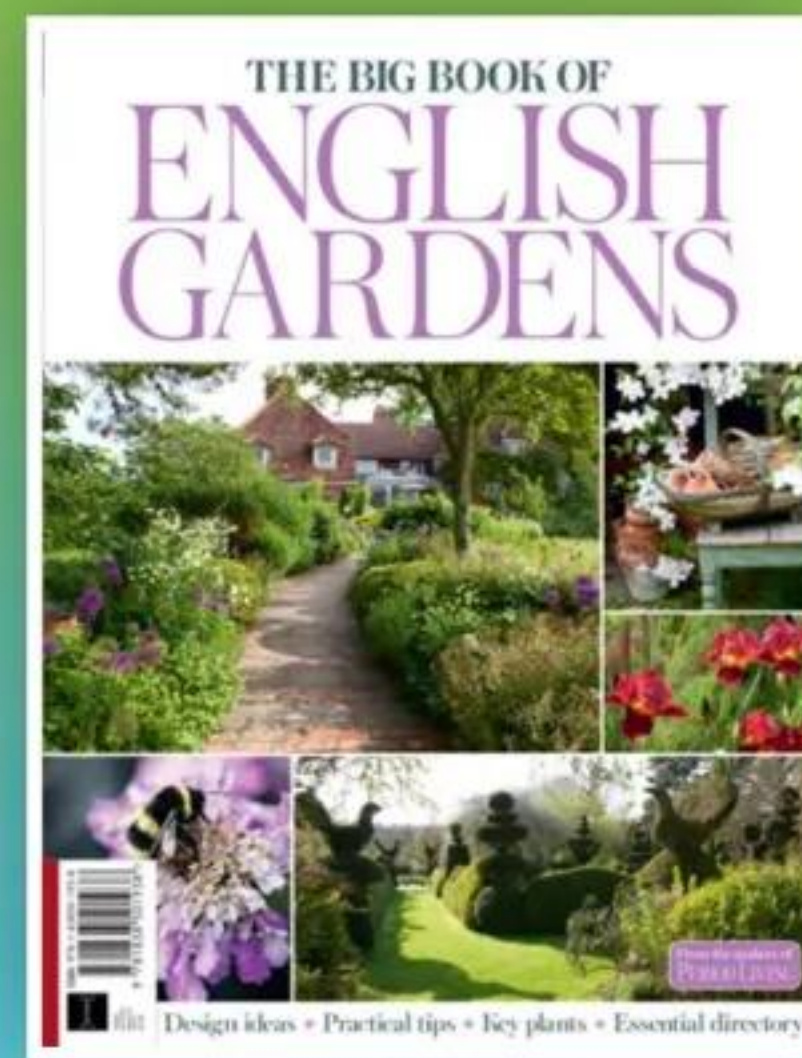
GO APE!

The best time of day to spot orangutans is from sunrise to 9am and then again from 2pm until the sun goes down. The apes tend to feed at these times as it is cooler, which means you'll be able to watch them and take pics as they won't be moving around as much.

Tabin Wildlife Reserve

The largest reserve in Malaysia at 123,000 hectares, Tabin Wildlife Reserve was created in 1984 to help protect disappearing species in the area. There are nine species of primate, including the western tarsier, cats such as the clouded leopard and civet cat, as well as a huge variety of birds. Home to 1,400 wild orangutans, many of which are released from Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, the reserve is a wonderful place to spot these tree-dwellers. There are nine trekking trails, and you can opt to go on a night safari or even camp under the stars from one of the wooden lodges to watch out for orangutans with the soundtrack of the jungle in the background. Just like when King Louie kidnapped Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*, if you're lucky enough to spot an orangutan, it'll steal your heart.





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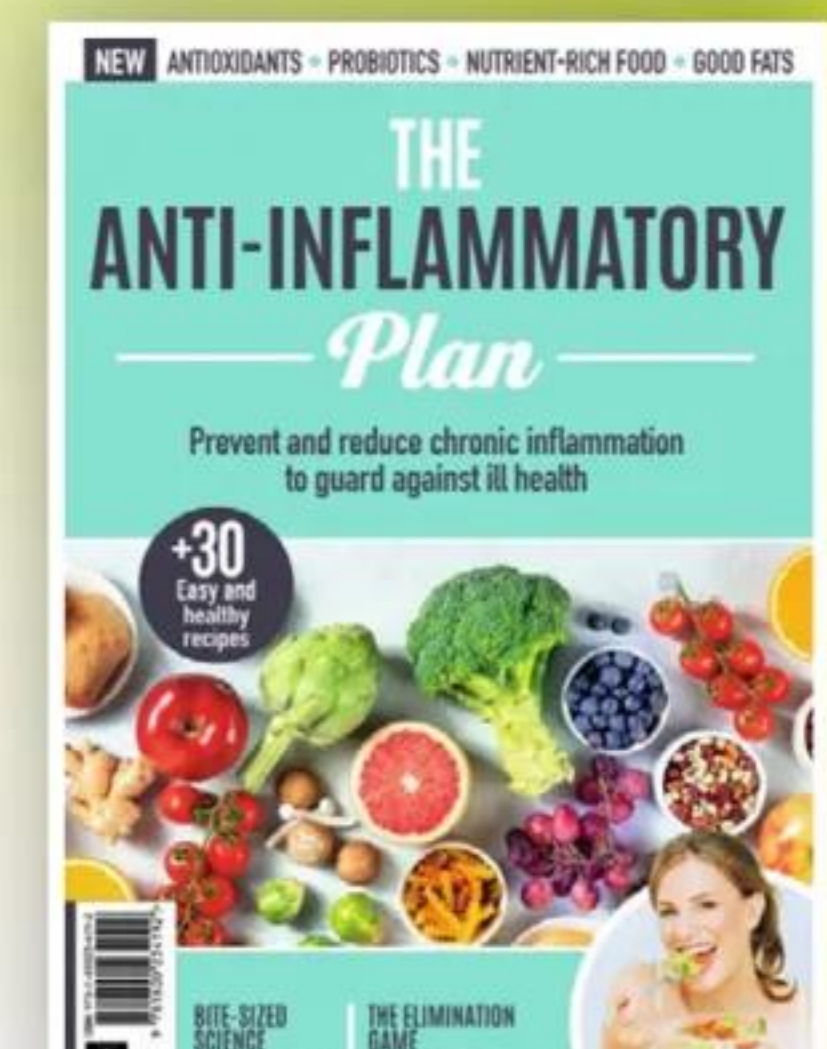
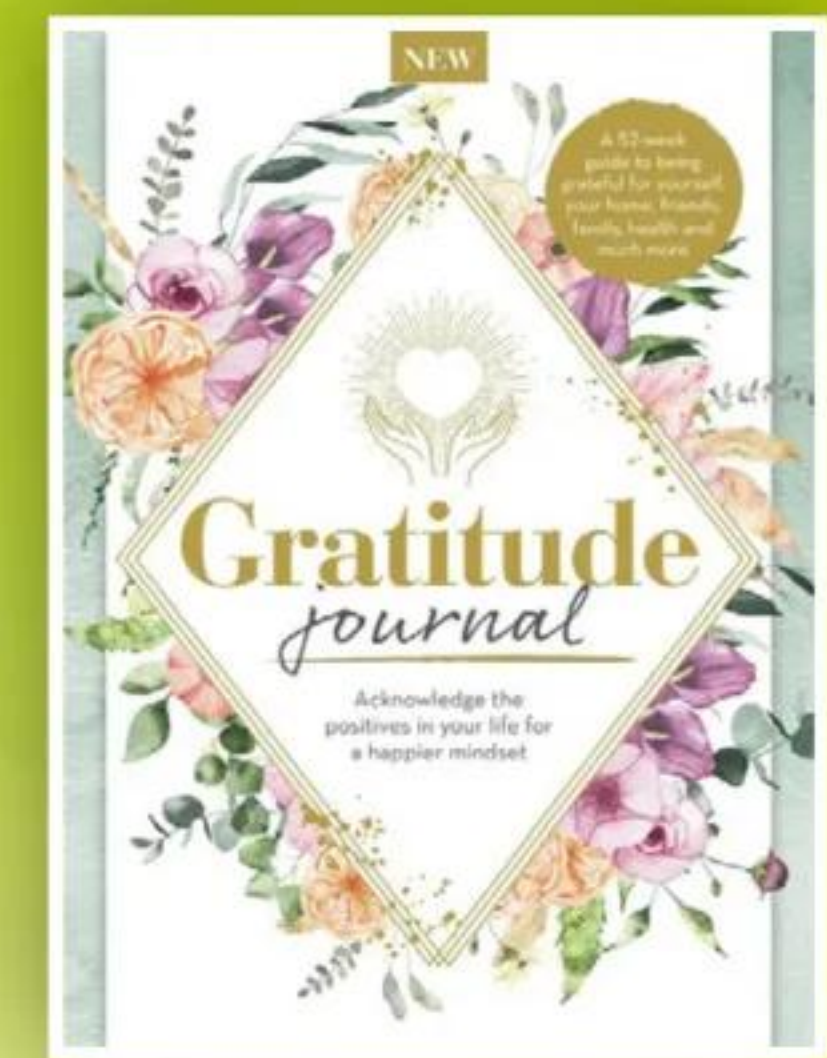
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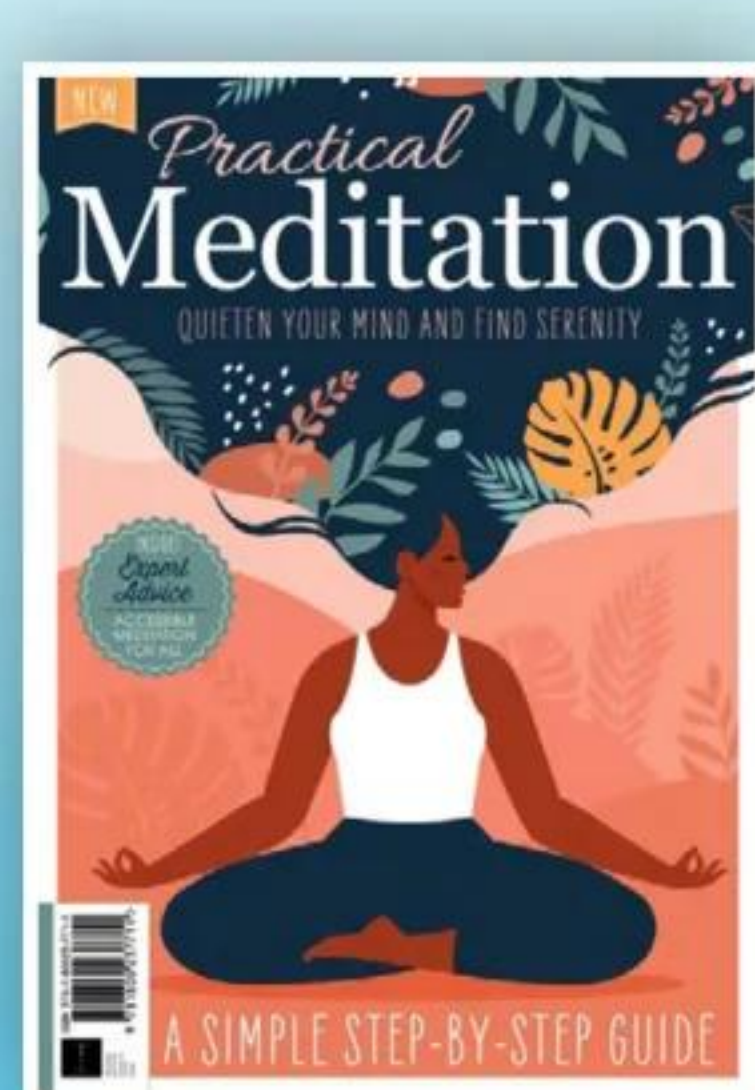
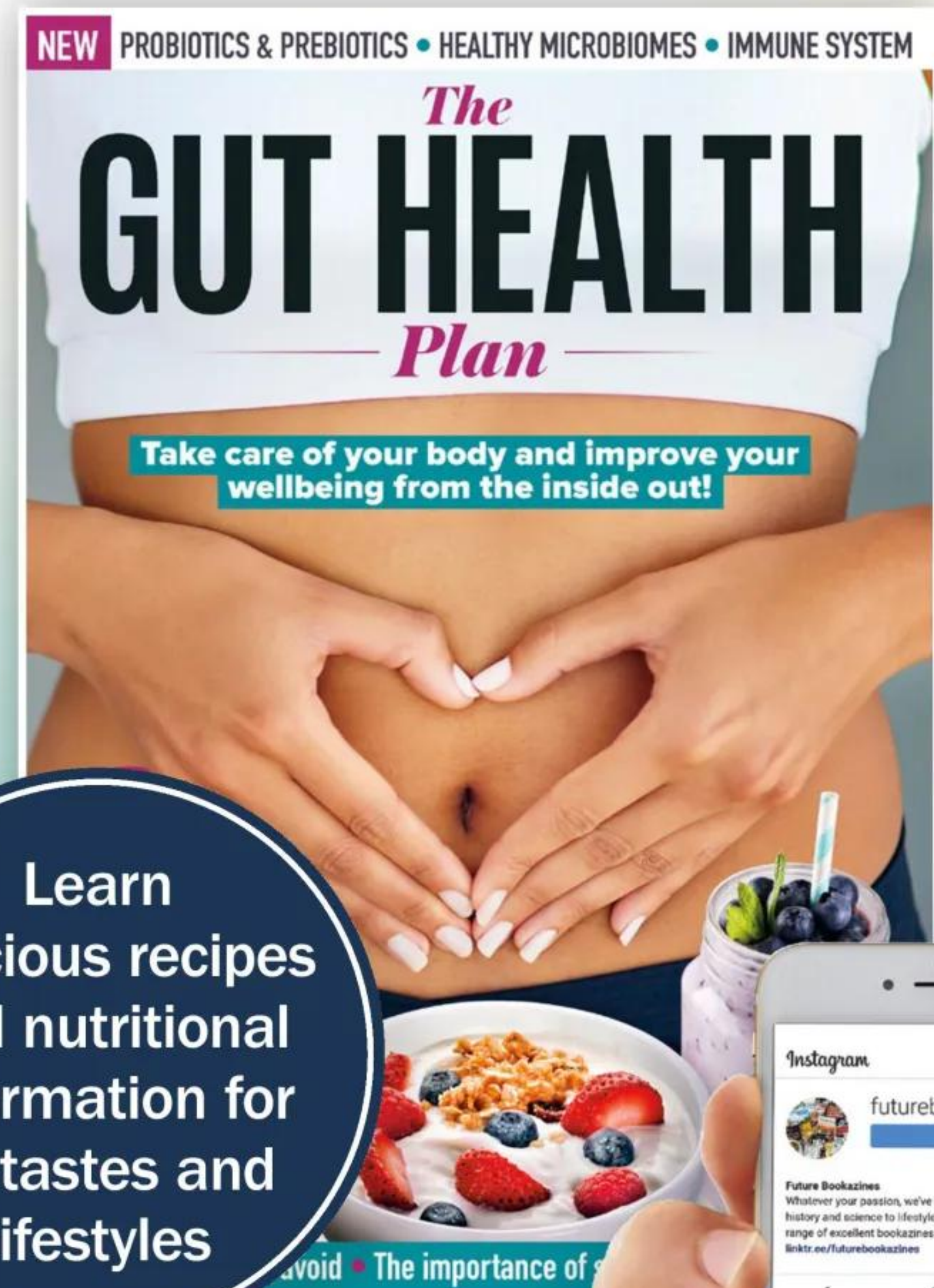
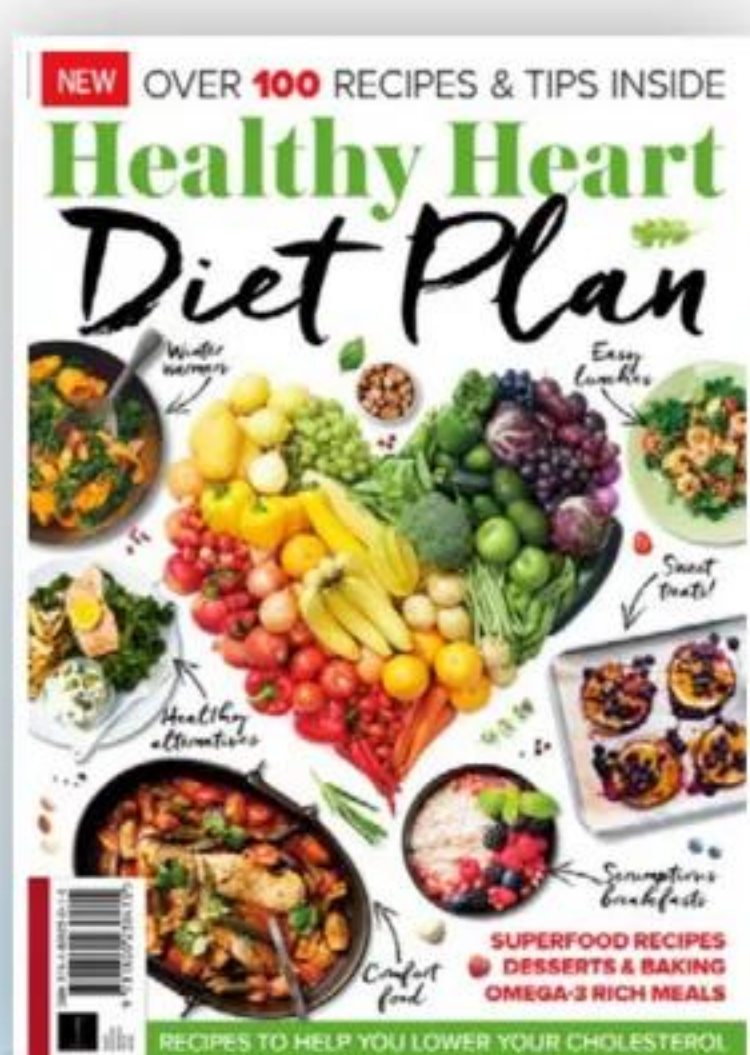
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101 EPIC Adventures



SWIM IN CENOTES *Mexico*



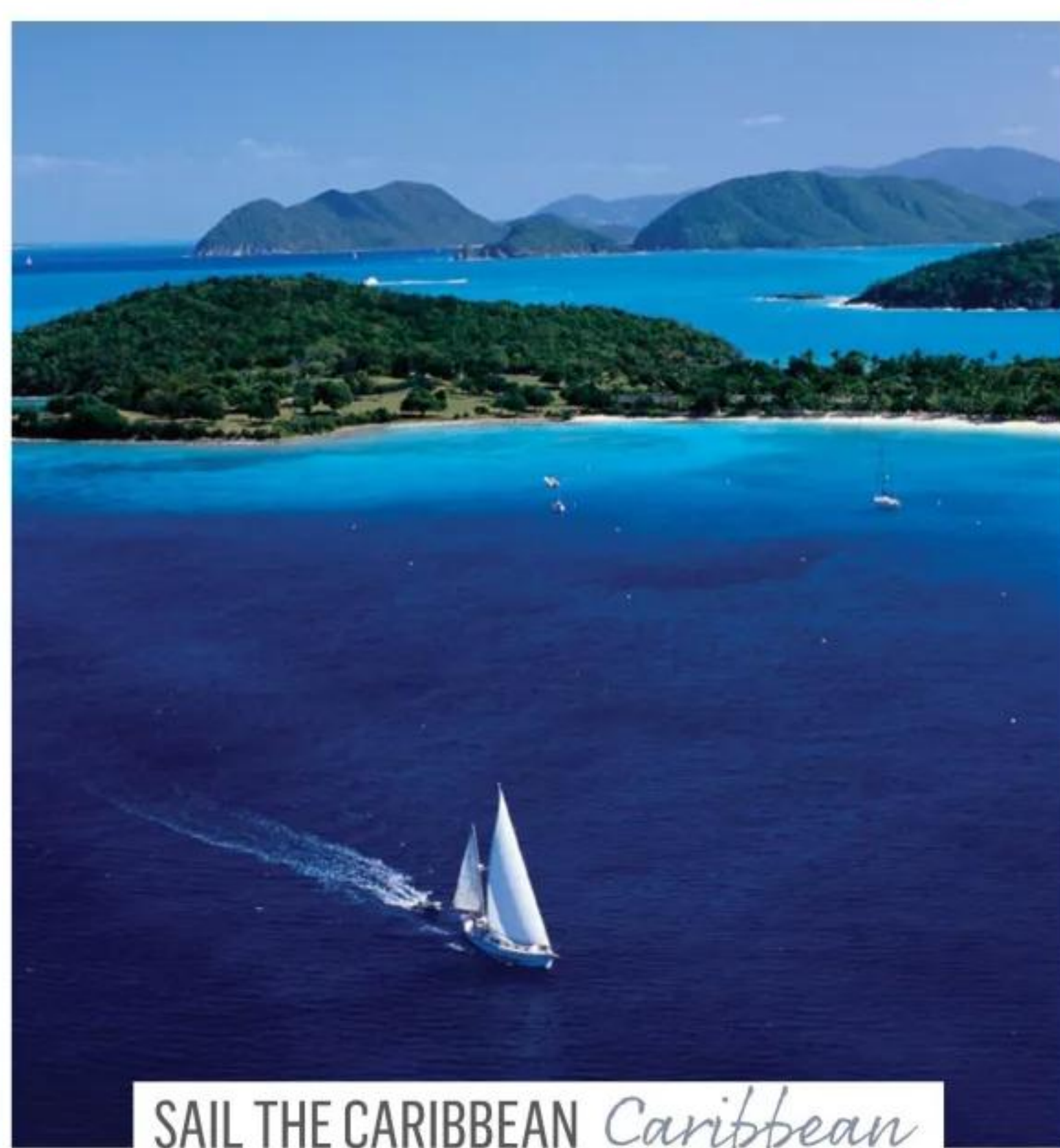
DRIVE ROUTE 66 *USA*



RIDE A CAMEL *Egypt*



GO ON A SAFARI *Africa*



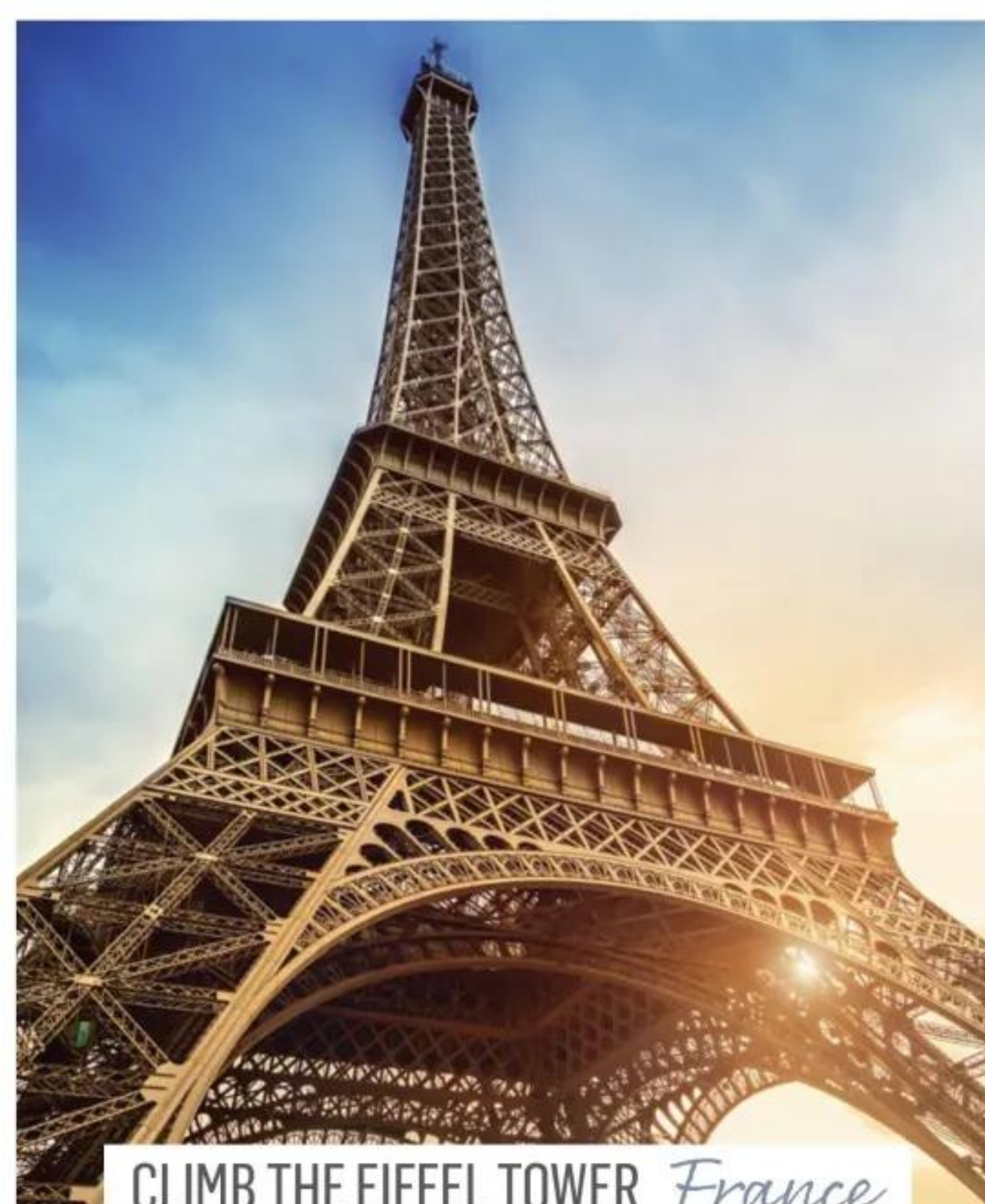
SAIL THE CARIBBEAN *Caribbean*



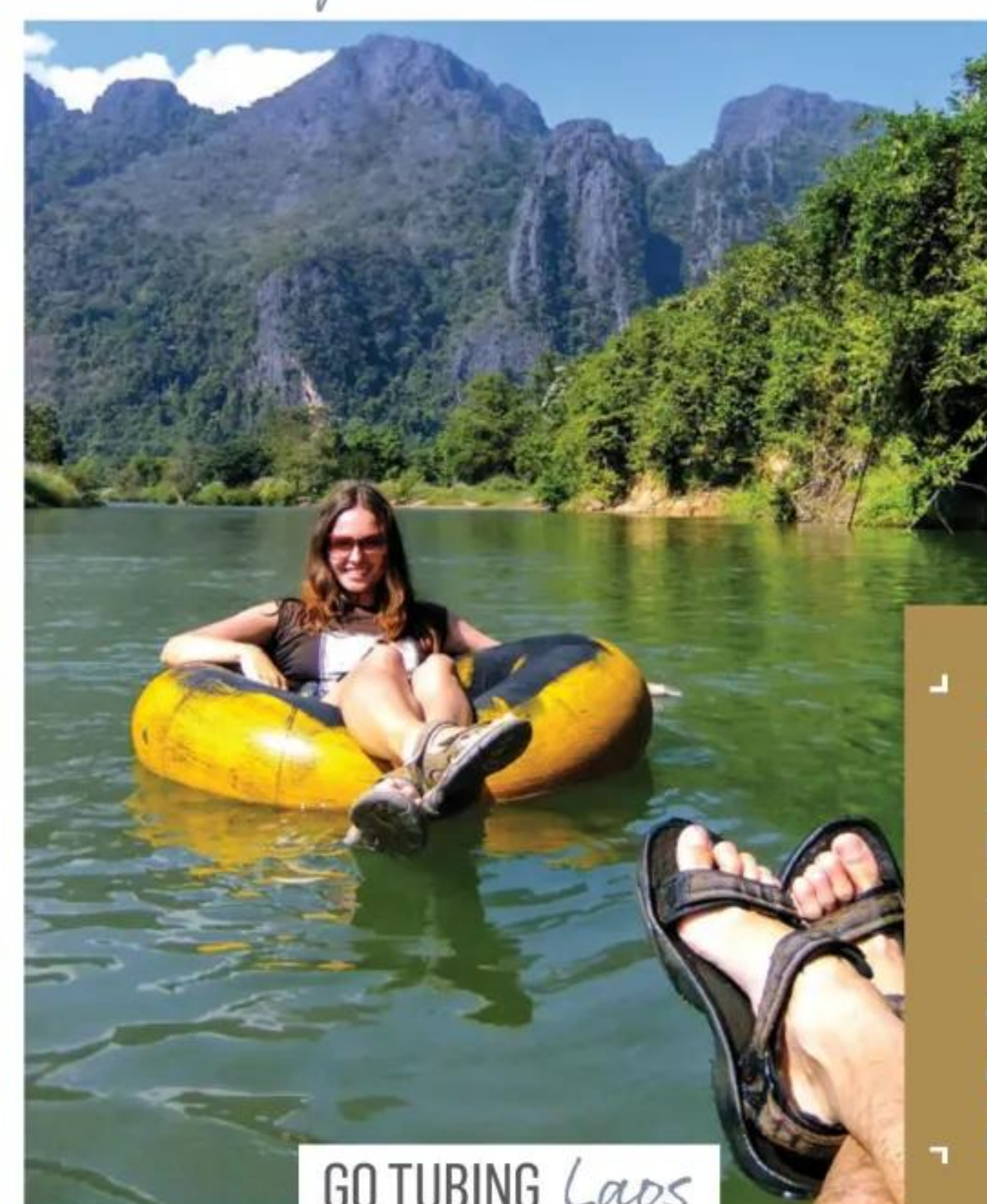
BATHE IN HOT SPRINGS *Turkey*



TREK TO MACHU PICCHU *Peru*



CLIMB THE EIFFEL TOWER *France*



GO TUBING *Laos*

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